IMPACT OF PROGRAM ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

A CASE OF AN APPLIED LINGUISTICS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

While program-level assessment has become common in higher education, questions remain about the impacts of assessment on teaching and learning in academic programs. Despite the considerable assessment activity happening in higher education, assessment scholars still have difficulty finding evidence of programs "closing the loop," that is using assessment to make meaningful improvements to teaching and learning (Banta & Blaich, 2010). Assessment scholars have called for more in-depth research on program-level assessment, noting a need for more research into how individual programs are engaging in assessment and what kinds of impacts assessment is having at the program level (Ewell, Paulson, & Kinzie, 2011).

Using a qualitative case study approach, this study investigated the processes and impacts of assessment practice in an applied linguistics program in higher education. Data was collected over a two-year period, and data collection methods included participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. Lattuca, Terenzini, and Volkwein's (2006) Engineering Change model was used as an initial framework for data analysis and adapted over the course of the study.

The findings revealed that the program experienced changes to faculty culture, administrative policies and practices, curriculum and instruction, and student experiences. However, specific changes within those categories often differed from those outlined in Lattuca et al.'s model. The study reveals the complexity of the assessment process and indicates that rather than follow a simple, unidirectional inquiry loop like the one presented in the assessment cycle, programs may need to engage in a number of challenging intermediate steps and detours as they work to use assessment to improve teaching and learning. The study also shows that with some modifications the Engineering Change model can be applied to research on assessment in

programs without professional accreditation, such as an applied linguistics program, and used as a framework for research methods such as qualitative case studies.

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CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Over the last three decades, interest in the assessment of student learning for program and institutional purposes has grown steadily in US higher education. Recent surveys indicate that over 85% of institutions in the US and over 80% of academic departments are engaged in formal assessment activities (Ewell et al., 2011; Heiland & Rosenthal, 2011; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014)[1]. Institutional and program level assessment is now required by all regional accrediting organizations in the US (Provezis, 2010), and program-level assessment is becoming an increasingly common requirement for professional accreditation. Moreover, the growth of assessment shows no signs of waning: In their most recent national survey of colleges and universities, Kuh et al. found that "there is significantly more assessment activity now than a few years ago," and the issue remains high on the national agenda (2014, p. 3).

In response to the increasing prevalence of assessment, a growing body of practitioner focused literature on assessment in higher education has developed. This includes a large collection of 'how to' texts and guidelines for carrying out assessment. Well known work includes books by Maki (2010), Suskie (2009), Driscoll and Wood (2007), Allen (2004), and Walvoord (2004). There is also a growing collection of online professional resources providing guidelines and materials for assessment. These are provided by organizations such as the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), but also increasingly by assessment offices at individual colleges and universities as they distribute materials to help faculty members involved in the assessment process.

[1] Types of assessment commonly used at the academic program level include capstone experiences, portfolios, performance assessments, projects, local or national tests, comprehensive exams, and surveys, among others (Ewell, Paulson, & Kinzie, 2011).

However, as Banta (2004) notes, there is no single approach or "silver bullet" for assessment. For this reason, there is also a large collection of literature providing anecdotes of assessment experiences and examples of what scholars consider best practices in assessment. Banta, one of the assessment movement's early proponents and chief scholars, has edited a number of volumes of profiles of good practice in outcomes assessment at both the institutional and disciplinary level (Banta, 2004; Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009). Bresciani (2006) has provided a book focusing on outcomes assessment-based program review, which provides examples from several "good-practice institutions." Examples and anecdotes are also commonly found in journals such as the "New Directions…" publications, which since the 1980s have dedicated a number of issues to assessment (e.g., Borden & Pike, 2008; Ewell, 1985; Halpern, 1987; Ratcliff, Lubinescu, & Gaffney, 2001; Rickards & Stitt-Bergh, 2016). Within the field of Applied Linguistics, educators involved in language program evaluation have published a number of accounts of program assessment in higher education language programs. (Norris & Davis, 2015; Norris, Davis, Sinicrope, & Watanabe, 2009).

The assessment literature is also full of reflective and theoretical pieces on assessment. Indeed, this may be the largest body of literature as scholars discuss challenges and developments in the field of assessment (Angelo, 1999; Banta & Blaich, 2010; Ewell, 1997); work toward developing principles of good practice (Banta, 2002b; Hutchings, 1993); and discuss its interaction with other educational movements such as learner-centered education (Barr & Tagg, 1995), accountability (Ewell, 2005, 2008, 2009), and the scholarship of teaching and learning (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). While most of this literature has focused on assessment at the institutional level, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in assessment in the disciplines. For example, Heiland and Rosenthal (2011) have published an

entire volume of essays on assessment in the discipline of literary studies, addressing assessment issues of particular interest to literary studies faculty.

However, one area in which there is little literature to be found is empirical research on formal institutional or program assessment. Despite the fact that most higher education institutions and programs are now engaged in some form of assessment, there remains a lack empirical research on actual assessment impact and implementation. The lack of research literature is particularly unfortunate given the challenges that the field of assessment continues to face – challenges which have lingered even as the field of assessment has grown and matured. For example, one key issue in assessment practice is "closing the assessment loop" (Banta & Blaich, 2010). This phrase refers to the challenge of getting institutions and departments to use assessment results to make meaningful changes to their programs. Banta and Blaich (2010) note that even in the more recent literature it is difficult to find examples that show that assessment findings are being used for improvement. When Banta, Jones, and Black (2009) solicited profiles of programs with good assessment practices for their book, they found that only six percent of the programs submitting profiles could show any evidence that learning had actually improved. While most institutions and programs are now regularly engaging in assessment processes, actually using assessment results to make meaningful improvements clearly remains a challenge.

More empirical research is needed to better understand this issue and assessment practice in higher education as a whole. In recent years, NILOA has made an effort to address the lack of research by conducting a number of large scale studies, principally national surveys. These surveys provide us with a broad overview of the state of outcomes assessment in undergraduate education in the US. However, a deeper understanding of how assessment is being implemented and how it is impacting academic programs is still needed. In particular, there is a need for more

research into assessment at the individual academic program level, where so much assessment activity is taking place but so little empirical research has been done. As the authors of NILOA's 2010 survey (Ewell et al., 2011) concluded:

> More case studies of individual programs engaged in assessment and more attention to how different disciplines conceptualize and undertake the task of assessing student learning outcomes would contribute greatly to what we now know. (p. 21)

This case study aims to address this gap in the literature. By investigating in depth the impacts of the assessment process on one university academic program, the study sheds light on what happens during and as a result of the assessment process. Additionally, the study aims to develop a framework for investigating assessment impacts at the program level by adapting the Engineering Change framework (Lattuca, Terenzini, & Volkwein, 2006), a framework originally developed for survey research on the impacts of outcomes assessment in accredited engineering programs, and applying the adapted model to a new discipline and research method.

Clarifying Terms

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify how assessment and related terms are being used in the present study. Ewell (2002) points out that a problem the assessment movement has faced since the beginning is that the term assessment means "different things to different people" (p. 9). Thus, assessment discussions in higher education often result in misunderstandings as educators fail to clarify amongst themselves what assessment is and how they differentiate it from related terms like evaluation. Moreover, assessment in higher education takes place at multiple levels: individual, program, institution, etc., with educators often using the same general term, assessment, without specifying the level they are talking about. In the following section, I define assessment as it is being used in this study, discuss what I mean by

program-level assessment, and distinguish between assessment and closely related terms such as outcomes assessment and evaluation.

Assessment and Program-Level Assessment

In higher education administration, a popular definition for assessment comes from Palomba and Banta's influential book Assessment Essentials (1999, p. 4): "Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development." This use of the term assessment differs from how it is typically used in classroom teaching. For classroom instructors, the term assessment is most closely associated with the process of collecting information about individual student learning. That information is then used to make judgments about an individual student or provide constructive feedback to that student.

Both of these uses of the term fall under the broader definition of assessment, that is "the systematic gathering of information about student learning in support of teaching and learning" (Norris, 2006, p. 579); however, Palomba and Banta's definition places the focus on the program or institution rather than the individual student. This is consistent with how the assessment movement in higher education has been using the term in its literature since the 1980s – although much more often this literature pertains to institution-level assessment than program-level assessment.

Because the focus of this study is program-level assessment, I have adapted Palomba and Banta's definition to focus on assessment use at the academic program level. For the purposes of this study, I am defining program-level assessment as:

> The systematic collection, review, and use of information about an educational program undertaken for the purpose of improving teaching and learning <u>in the program</u>.

This distinguishes program-level assessment from institution-level assessment where information may be gathered for improving overall institutional effectiveness but not necessarily for use by those working in individual academic programs. Norris (2006, p. 579) points out that assessment "should always provide locally useful information on learners and on learning to those individuals responsible for doing something about it."

Outcomes Assessment

It is also important to clarify the difference between assessment and outcomes assessment. Although assessment and outcomes assessment are used interchangeably in some literature, in this study outcomes assessment is considered a sub-category of assessment and refers specifically to the process of assessing stated student learning outcomes; these may be course learning outcomes (CLOs), program learning outcomes (PLOs) or institution learning outcomes (ILOs). Palomba and Banta (1999) point out that given the complexity of the student experience in higher education, assessment should not be limited to stated learning outcomes; rather, educators engaged in assessment should be open to assessing many aspects of the student experience and many program components which could affect student learning and development. Therefore, assessment as it is used in this study includes both the assessment of stated learning outcomes and the assessment of other aspects of the program and student experiences which affect student learning.

Evaluation and the Evaluation Context

Evaluation can be defined in a number of ways, and scholars vary in how they differentiate between assessment and evaluation (Suskie, 2009). In this study I am using Norris' (2006) definition of evaluation for educational programs:

> Evaluation is the gathering of information about any of the variety of elements that constitute educational programs, for a variety of purposes that primarily include understanding, demonstrating, improving, and judging program value. (p. 579)

According to Norris, whereas assessment focuses on teaching and learning, evaluation involves "the gathering of information about any of the variety of elements that constitute educational programs..." and is not necessarily limited to concerns about teaching and learning. Departments, for example, are often evaluated based on their research programs, attainment of grant money, and service to the community, in addition to teaching and learning. Thus, evaluation can be considered a broader, umbrella term, and assessment a sub-category of evaluation that focuses on teaching and learning.

This study focuses specifically on program-level assessment; however, I also consider how assessment fits into a program's broader evaluation context recognizing that there are often other forms of evaluation (e.g. faculty evaluations, cost and revenue reports, college reviews) which interact with and influence the processes and impacts of program-level assessment.

Approaches to Academic Program Evaluation

Program assessment is only one of several approaches to formal academic program evaluation that have developed in higher education over the past century. In the following section, I discuss the history and development of assessment in higher education as well as two other approaches to academic program evaluation: accreditation and program review. Assessment is often confused with accreditation and program review. This is not surprising given that as these three approaches have emerged and evolved over the last century, they have frequently overlapped and influenced each other. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that they are distinct approaches which originated to meet different needs. The three approaches are

discussed below in a rough chronological order according to when they appeared on the higher education landscape: accreditation, program review, and then assessment.

Accreditation

Accreditation is a system of quality assurance for higher education in the US that is now over 100 years old (Eaton, 2012) . It is conducted by nongovernmental accrediting organizations, although as I discuss in more detail below, the federal government has had a fair amount of influence on the accreditation process. The US Department of Education lists four main functions of accreditation:

1. Assess the quality of academic programs at institutions of higher education;
2. Create a culture of continuous improvement of academic quality at colleges and universities and stimulate a general raising of standards among educational institutions;
3. Involve faculty and staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning;
4. Establish criteria for professional certification and licensure and for upgrading courses offering such preparation.

   (https://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg2.html)

There is no central accrediting organization for higher education in the US, rather most colleges and universities are accredited by one of six regional accrediting organizations officially recognized by Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) (www.chea.org). While the regional accrediting organizations are the most prominent, there are also three other kinds of accrediting organizations as well: There are professional (also referred to as specialized or programmatic) accrediting organizations for programs preparing students for professions such as medicine, engineering, law, and education; national faith-based accrediting organizations, and

national career-based accrediting organizations. In all there are over 80 accrediting organizations recognized by CHEA or the US Department of Education (USDE) (Eaton, 2012).

A brief history of accreditation. Accrediting organizations in the US date back to 1885 when the Northeast Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) was formed. The association was originally formed to facilitate the admission of students from secondary schools to higher education institutions and the transfer of students between higher education institutions. Other regional accreditation associations formed soon after, and in 1924 the sixth regional association, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), was established (Brittingham, 2009). Each association established a set of standards and a process of peer review to ensure the quality of the institutions in the association. Through the first half of the 20th Century, accrediting organizations continued to grow and develop more complex standards and processes for accreditation as they adapted to the changing needs of their member institutions (Brittingham, 2009).

After WWII, the role and influence of accrediting organizations changed considerably. Following the passage of the GI Bill, the federal government sought a way to ensure the legitimacy of institutions receiving federal funding, particularly financial aid for students on the GI Bill. With the passage of the Veteran's Readjustment Act of 1952, the federal government required that institutions receiving federal financial aid have regional accreditation. Thus, accreditation became a means of protecting against fraud and abuse of the GI Bill (Wolff, 2005). Since then, the link between federal financial aid and accreditation has been strengthened through subsequent acts, particularly the Higher Education Act of 1965 and through its reauthorization every four years. As a result, regional accreditors have become gatekeepers for federal funding in higher education, and accreditation has become a de-facto requirement for

most higher education institutions as many students depend on federal financial aid. States have also come to rely on both professional and regional accrediting organizations to help ensure the quality of higher education programs: Many states will only grant licenses to practice in certain professions (e.g., medicine, law, and teaching) to graduates from regionally accredited institutions and professionally accredited programs (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Wolff, 2005).

The focus and standards for accreditation shifted in the 1980s as the federal government pressured accrediting organizations to hold higher education institutions more accountable for the academic achievement of their graduates. A number of national reports published in the 1980s criticized the effectiveness of higher education in the US and called on higher education institutions to focus more on access, retention, and assessment of student learning[2] (Brittingham, 2009). Moreover, changes made to the Higher Education Act of 1992 increased the pressure for accrediting organizations to develop stricter standards for university programs and place greater emphasis on outcomes and performance (Brittingham, 2009). At the same time, a number of states were also adopting their own initiatives to assess student outcomes (Lubinescu, Ratcliff, & Gaffney, 2001). In response to the growing pressure, accrediting organizations began to revise their accreditation standards. Prior to this time, accrediting organizations had focused primarily on evaluating institutional resources and processes: Accreditation standards had asked institutions about the qualifications of instructors, admissions requirements, classroom and laboratory facilities, size of the library, student faculty ratio, and financial matters. It was assumed that high quality inputs and processes would lead to quality outcomes in terms of

[2] The report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), although focusing on K-12 education, reflected and also contributed to a wider concern that the US was falling behind other countries in education. *Involvement in Learning* (Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education, 1984), *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (Association for American Colleges, 1985) and *Time for Results* (National Governors' Association, 1986) focused on higher education and called for higher standards, more coherent curricula, and better assessment of student performance and learning outcomes.

student learning and achievement. In response to the shift in federal and state policies in the 80s and 90s, however, accrediting organizations began to require that institutions describe student learning outcomes and state how they would be assessed. Accreditation frameworks steadily evolved to include more focus on student performance, outcomes assessment, and assessment use.

Despite the considerable changes made to accreditation frameworks in the 1990s and early 2000s, in 2006 the office of the US Secretary of Education released the report, "A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of US Higher Education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), which was highly critical of higher education in general and the accreditation system in particular. The report, commonly referred to as the Spellings Report after Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, called for greater transparency in the accrediting process; a consumer-friendly database which would allow the public to compare student learning outcomes, completion rates, and other data across institutions; and more measures of student learning, including value-added measures. The report received considerable pushback from educators and policy makers alike. Much of the pushback reflected growing concerns about neoliberal policies and the commodification of education in which students are seen as consumers of a basic product and education as a private rather than public good (Jankowski & Provezis, 2014). Indeed, in prepared remarks introducing the report, Spellings (2006) compared choosing a college or university to buying a car:

> If you want to buy a new car you go online and compare a full range of models, makes, and pricing options. And when you're done you'll know everything from how well each car holds its value down to wheel size and number of cup-holders. The same transparency and ease should be the case when students and families shop for colleges…

From a philosophical perspective, critics of the Spellings report pointed out the many public benefits of higher education and the need for diverse institutions to address a range of societal needs and student goals (Brittingham, 2008). From a logical perspective, they noted that assumptions about choice were faulty as students' educational choices were found to be restricted by a number of factors, the main ones being location, admission requirements, price, and programs offered. (Ewell, 2009). Moreover, the logic underlying comparisons such as the one Spellings made above was also faulty in that unlike consumers buying a car, students influenced the inputs and processes, creating a much more complex system. In the end, most of the recommendations in the report were not adopted. However, the report served as a warning to institutions and accrediting organizations as they realized that whether warranted or not, calls for further accountability were not going away, and they would need to address increasing expectations with regard to transparency and the assessment of student learning (Brittingham, 2008).

The accreditation process. Though accreditation processes vary depending on the accrediting organization, the general process typically involves the following steps: (a) the institution conducts self-study and writes a report in which it describes how it is meeting the accreditation standards; (b) a peer review team conducts an offsite review followed by a site visit to the institution; (c) the peer review team writes a report and recommendations for the accrediting organization; (d) the accrediting organization decides on the accreditation status of the institution under review; (e) the accrediting organization may also make recommendations or requirements for follow up actions or reports by the institution. Re-accreditation typically takes place every five to ten years. Because of the comprehensive nature of the self-study, which now includes inputs, financial data, performance measures, and demonstration of outcomes

assessment, institutions are encouraged to engage in ongoing data collection and review processes throughout the five to ten-year cycle.

The intersection of accreditation, outcomes assessment, and program review. Outcomes assessment has now become an integral part of the accreditation process for all regional accrediting organizations, and is now required at the course and program level as well as at the institutional level. For example, current WASC standards require that, "The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level" (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2013, p. 15). However, many institutions continue to struggle with the outcomes assessment aspect of accreditation. In 2010, Provezis found that the need for improved outcomes assessment had become a common reason for accrediting organizations to require follow-up actions from many institutions. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) reported that approximately two-thirds of its institutions were required to undertake follow up actions related to assessment and the NEASC reported that approximately 80% of its institutions had been asked to follow-up on assessment (Provezis, 2010).

In addition to outcomes assessment, program review has also now become thoroughly incorporated into the accreditation process: Most accrediting organizations now require that institutions conduct systematic program review of their degree programs and departments (which includes, but is not limited to outcomes assessment). For example, WASC's standard 2.7 requires that:

> All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program's learning outcomes; retention and graduation rates; and, where

> appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations. (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2013, p. 15)

Program Review

Program Review emerged in the second half of the 20th Century as higher education institutions faced pressures to demonstrate accountability to external stakeholders, mainly state boards, and to engage in internal curricular reform to adapt to changing student and societal needs. Previously, higher education institutions had responded to internal needs through informal curricular reviews and state boards had conducted their own evaluations of programs and institutions when and if they felt it necessary. However, in the 1950s and 60s, colleges and universities began to develop a formal, systematic program evaluation process that was intended to demonstrate accountability to external stakeholders as well as to address internal concerns and this became known as program review (Conrad & Wilson, 1985). Conrad and Wilson (1985) define program review as:

> The process of defining, collecting, and analyzing information about an existing program or non-instructional unit to arrive at a judgment about the continuation, modification, enhancement, or termination of the program or unit. (p. 10)

A brief history of program review. Program review emerged in the 1950s and expanded rapidly in the 1960s and 70s. According to a study by Barak (1982), only 12% of US higher education institutions had any policies or procedures in place for program review before 1965, but by the 1980s, 82% of institutions were implementing some form of systematic program review. During the 60s and 70s, state agencies mainly saw program review as a means of addressing concerns about the unnecessary duplication of academic programs (Barak, 2007). In

the 80s and 90s program review became more comprehensive and focused on improving program quality. It was also applied more broadly and regularly: Whereas originally program review had only been conducted for certain programs (for example, graduate programs) or on an ad hoc basis –when crisis or decision-making needs demanded– by the 1990s institutions were requiring program review for most academic degree programs on a regular basis and establishing 5-8 year review cycles (Barak & Mets, 1995).

Although program review is traditionally linked to state mandates and oversight, university systems, individual institutions, and even departments often have their own uses and criteria for program review. The most common reason that institutions give for conducting program review is program improvement (Barak, 1982; Barak & Breier, 1990; Barak & Sweeney, 1995; Conrad & Wilson, 1985), although the notion of program improvement is broad and includes improving program efficiency as well as program quality. Another common reason given for program review is resource allocation or re-allocation (Barak, 1982; Barak & Sweeney, 1995; Conrad & Wilson, 1985), and since the 1970s, program review has been increasingly used in planning and budget decisions at the institutional as well as state levels. During times of retrenchment, both states and institutions have used program review to inform decisions regarding program reduction or termination (Barak, 1982; Conrad & Wilson, 1985). In fact, in 1982 Barak noted that at some institutions program review had become a euphemism for program termination. Yet, Mets (1995) claims that despite its more common association with retrenchment, program review has, on rare occasions, been found to result in program expansion or increased funding.

By the 1990s, program review at the various levels had become common enough that redundancy had become a problem. One academic program could be required to conduct four

different program reviews: a state review, a university system review, an accreditation review, and an institutional review (Barak, 2007). These reviews would ask for similar but slightly different information, for potentially different purposes, and on different timelines. Since the 1990s, there have been efforts to better integrate program review with other planning and evaluation processes to reduce the duplication of evaluation efforts. In the 21st century many institutions, in coordination with state agencies and accrediting organizations have been making efforts to integrate and streamline processes (Gayle, Tewarie, & White, 2003).

The program review process. Given the multiple purposes that program review can serve, the models and methods for program review can vary widely. In general, program review is a comprehensive study that uses both quantitative and qualitative data and looks at the following four aspects of a program: quality, need, demand, and cost; although how each of these categories is assessed and the importance of each varies (Conrad & Wilson, 1985). Program review may include self-studies, peer reviews, or a combination of both (Barak & Breier, 1990). Assessment of student learning and specifically outcomes assessment are increasingly included as required components of program review.

A recurring issue in program review literature is the ability of the program review process to accommodate multiple purposes. Even as programs and institutions strive to streamline and integrate evaluation processes, they struggle with how to use program review for multiple and potentially conflicting purposes. For example, Conrad and Wilson (1985) note the challenge of using the same program review process for both program improvement and resource allocation purposes. Programs may be hesitant to honestly evaluate their weaknesses for program improvement purposes if that information could be used against them during resource allocation decisions. They also point out that information needed for state level decision making may not

match the information needed for quality improvement and decision making at the institutional level. (Much of the discussion regarding the ability of program review to accommodate multiple purposes mirrors debates in the assessment literature regarding the tensions between accountability and program improvement purposes for assessment.)

Assessment in Higher Education

The recognized assessment movement is generally traced back to 1985, when the first national conference on assessment in higher education was held (Ewell, 2002; Wright, 2002). A number of factors have influenced the growth of the assessment movement as educators have responded external accountability pressures and educational reform interests from within academia.

A brief history of the assessment movement. As mentioned in the accreditation section, a number of national reports expressing concern about the quality of higher education in the US were published in the 1980s, calling for greater accountability and putting pressure on institutions to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs. Included in these reports were calls for more systematic assessment of student learning and academic achievement. In response to this accountability pressure, some states, such as Florida and Texas, advocated large-scale, standardized exams to assess the learning and achievement of students in public colleges and universities. Other states, such as Virginia and Missouri, required that their public higher education institutions develop their own institution-centered (also referred to as mission-centered) assessment programs. For most universities and colleges, the institution-centered approach to assessment, where the institution (or program) determines its own goals, outcomes, and assessment methods, was preferable to the use of statewide standardized exams (Ewell, 2008). Seeing this approach to assessment to be perhaps the least threatening response to the

growing accountability movement and political pressure from federal and state policy makers, universities and colleges increasingly adopted variations of institution-centered assessment through the 1980s and 1990s. As accrediting organizations incorporated assessment into accreditation standards, and provided support for assessment training, assessment slowly became commonplace in higher education.

Although the widespread adoption of institution-driven assessment was motivated by accountability pressures, early advocates for this approach to assessment argued that assessment in higher education should be oriented toward program improvement. Beginning in the 1980s assessment scholars and practitioners like Banta (1997, 2002a, 2004), Ewell (1997, 2002, 2009), Wright (2002), Angelo (1999, 2002), and Walvoord (2011) set about gathering examples of best practices from early adopters of assessment and started producing guidelines and principles that emphasized doing and using assessment to improve teaching and learning. Over the past three decades, they, and a growing number of assessment specialists, have continued the effort to build higher education assessment capacity and further its use for institutional and program improvement purposes.

At the same time that institutions were responding to external accountability demands, an educational reform movement was emerging within academia as educators called for curricular and pedagogical reform in response to changing societal needs, increasing diversity in higher education, and new understandings of how students learn. Educational reformers called for more coherent curricula, more active learning for students, and a general shift in focus from teaching to learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Biggs, 1999; Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education, 1984). A key component of these educational reforms was

assessment which was seen as essential for providing both students and educators with feedback on what students were learning.

The desire for educational reform also spurred an array of new pedagogical approaches aimed at addressing changing student and societal higher education needs, such as abilities-based learning, collaborative learning, writing across the curriculum, service learning, learning communities, problem-based learning, etc. Many proponents of these approaches to teaching and learning used assessment as a means of demonstrating their effectiveness relative to traditional pedagogical approaches (Allen, 2004; Walvoord, 2004). Ewell concludes, "Assessment has thus been sustained in part because it has become a necessary condition for undertaking meaningful undergraduate reform" (2002, p. 23).

Thus, stimulated by a combination of accountability pressures from outside academia and program improvement and educational reform interests within academia, assessment practice in higher education has continued to grow. In 1989 the assessment movement established its own journal, *Assessment Update*, and in 1992 the American Association for Higher Education's Assessment Forum published the Nine Principles for Assessing Student Learning (Astin et al., 1992). These documents, along with many other proceeding publications, aimed at advancing assessment practice and encouraging the use of assessment for program improvement purposes. Although accreditation continues to be the primary driver of assessment activities today, the concept of assessment for program improvement purposes has become more widely accepted. Ewell (2009, p. 6) notes that among academics assessment now has a "perceived legitimacy" which it was not accorded two decades ago.

Assessment challenges. The tensions and ambiguities resulting from the dual drivers of assessment – accountability and improvement, remain a challenge for the assessment movement.

Ewell (2009, p. 7) notes that when done for accountability purposes, the aim of assessment is to "look as good as possible," whereas when done for improvement purposes, the aim is to identify deficiencies – two contradictory aims. Thus, it is not surprising that some faculty remain confused by assessment requirements. Assessment experts have tried to keep the focus on improvement, but, issues related to the politics and pressures of accountability are never far away. In part, because of assessment's association with the accountability movement, there are many faculty members who remain resistant to engaging in assessment. Other factors that have made faculty wary of embracing assessment include concerns about academic freedom and "initiative fatigue" – that is, faculty members feeling overwhelmed by the number of initiatives they may be asked to implement (Kuh & Hutchings, 2015). Heiland and Rosenthal (2011) summarize the issues that many faculty members may have with assessment:

> Assessment has registered with many faculty members as a potentially reductive accountability effort that will replicate the problems associated with NCLB, and this perception has to a high degree shaped its reception on college and university campuses. These negative associations, combined with the fact that faculty members often experience assessment as an unsupported and unsustainable addition to their workload…, an intrusion into painstakingly developed pedagogical strategies, or even a violation of academic freedom, mean that it has not struck most instructors as an intellectually promising avenue. (p. 13)

Assessment methods. Institutions and academic programs today use multiple methods of assessment, direct and indirect, to gather information on teaching and learning. Direct methods require students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, or understandings. For example, direct

assessment methods include tests[3], observations, writing assignments, portfolios, and capstone projects. Indirect methods ask students their opinions about what they have learned and their educational experiences. Examples of indirect assessment methods include student or alumni surveys, exit interviews, focus groups, and reflective essays (Allen, 2004). Hernon (2004) also includes tracking student data, such as retention rates and time to program completion, as an indirect assessment method because it can provide information about the program and student needs. Assessment experts emphasize the importance of using both direct and indirect methods: Direct methods, unlike indirect methods, can provide "compelling evidence" of student learning. However, direct methods do not necessarily help educators understand why students are or are not learning (Suskie, 2009, p. 23). Indirect methods can provide information on student experiences, in and out of the classroom, which can help educators better understand and improve their programs.

The assessment cycle. Today, assessment is perhaps most commonly presented to educators as a loop or cycle of inquiry. For example, Leskes and Wright (2005) describe assessment as a cycle of (1) defining goals of student learning; (2) gathering evidence of student learning; (3) analyzing and interpreting the evidence; and (4) using the findings to improve the effects of college on student learning. The cycle then begins again, "either with a revisiting of the original question to see whether changes… have led to the desired improvements, or with the exploration of a new problem" (Wright, 2006, p. 593). A number of other assessment experts, (Kinzie, Hutchings, & Jankowski, 2015; Maki, 2010; Suskie, 2009) use similar models, although

[3] Tests can include large-scale, statewide or national exams or locally-developed tests. Some universities use the CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment) which is a large-scale commercially developed exam designed to assess skills such as critical thinking; some foreign language programs use the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) to test students' language proficiency; and many professional programs use exams required for professional licensing, such as the Praxis tests for teacher certification. On the other hand, many departments create their own tests of knowledge or skills particularly relevant to their programs.

the amount of detail and number of steps in the models differ slightly. (See Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2.)

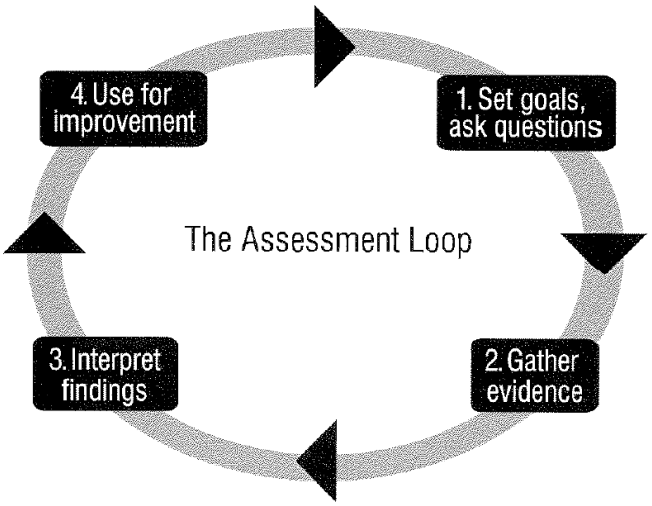

Figure 1.1. Leskes and Wright's assessment loop. From *The Art and Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes* (p. 6), by A. Leskes and B.D. Wright, 2005, Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Copyright 2005 by Association of American Colleges and Universities. Reprinted with permission.

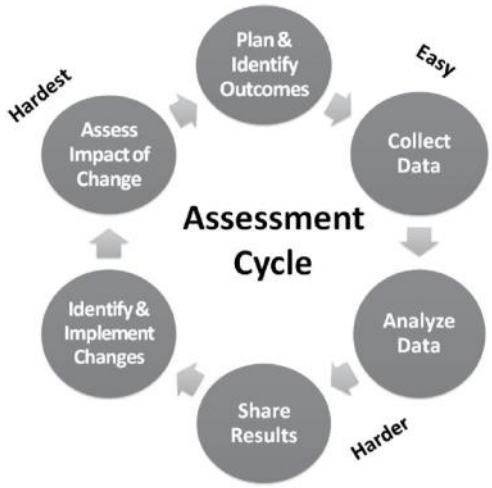

Figure 1.2. Kinzie, Hutchings, and Jankowski's assessment cycle. From "Fostering Greater Use of Assessment Results: Principles for Effective Practice," by J. Kinzie, P. Hutchings, and N.A. Jankowski, in G. D. Kuh and S. O. Ikenberry (Eds.), *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education* (p. 57), 2015, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2015 by John Wiley & Sons. Reprinted with permission.

The assessment cycle emphasizes assessment as a means of continuous improvement. The model outlines a process of continuous, systematic inquiry into student learning and experiences based on the belief that an ongoing effort to collect and use data to inform decision making and improve a program is more effective than sporadic assessment efforts (Maki, 2010). The assessment cycle also emphasizes the need to not only *do* but also *use* assessment. Whereas early discussions of the assessment process often focused on data gathering and stopped at interpreting and reporting the data, the assessment cycle includes a stage for use. Finally, the assessment cycle has a reflective component. Before beginning the cycle again, educators are encouraged to reflect on the assessment process itself, as well as any changes that have been implemented as a result of the assessment findings, and consider whether they are having the desired impacts or could be improved further. Assessment experts recognize that the hardest part of the assessment cycle is getting educators to act on findings in a way that leads to meaningful improvements in teaching and learning; Indeed, the phrase commonly used in assessment circles to describe this challenge, "closing the loop," is a reference to the final stage(s) of the assessment cycle.

Despite the challenges of completing the final stages of this model, the assessment cycle remains extremely popular, and variations of the assessment cycle can be found on any number of university assessment office websites.[4] It is considered useful for guiding faculty through the assessment process and helping them view assessment as an effort toward continuous improvement rather than simply an exercise in compliance. Part of the model's popularity may

[4] e.g., www.westminster.edu/academics/accreditation-assessment/cycle.cfm, https://assessment.gwu.edu/assessment-cycle, https://www.ctl.uga.edu/pages/assessment-cycle, https://www.lanecc.edu/assessment/basic-assessment-cycle, and https://www.jmu.edu/studentaffairs/staff-resources/saac/tools/assessment-cycle.shtml

be that the assessment cycle presents assessment as a simple, straightforward process, making it easy for faculty to digest. Jankowski and Provezis (2014) observe:

> The assessment process is presented as linear, where one step leads directly to the next, and assumes that goals are easily identifiable and agreed upon, selection of meaningful measures is a similarly easy process, and that the assessment data will clearly identify areas of improvement as well as potential solutions. Further, 'use' in assessment is presented as leading directly to improvement in outcomes or student learning. (p. 479)

However, the simplified nature of the assessment cycle which makes it popular for presenting assessment practice to faculty, may also be a disadvantage as faculty may not be prepared for complications that arise during the process.

Summary. The assessment movement is now firmly entrenched in higher education and, while assessment remains a distinct approach to higher education evaluation, it has also become an integral part of both accreditation and program review. The literature on assessment has shifted over the years as the assessment movement has matured: Whereas early assessment literature tended to focus on doing assessment more recent literature has focused on using assessment. Kinzie et al. (2015, p. 56) have noted, that while programs and institutions now have more assessment data than ever, "compelling questions remain about how to effectively use results." Thus, as the assessment movement has matured, assessment professionals have also recognized a need for more research into assessment in an effort to better understand current assessment practice and foster more meaningful assessment use.

CHAPTER 2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON ASSESSMENT

As I mentioned in the introduction, although practitioner literature on assessment abounds, empirical research on assessment is limited. However, in recent years, assessment scholars have worked to fill that gap. In the following section, I describe the literature on assessment research dividing it into three sections: NILOA research, which is mainly focused on describing the general state of outcomes assessment practice in US undergraduate education; best practices research; and program-level research.

NILOA Research

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) has conducted a number of research studies on outcomes assessment in higher education. Many of these studies are large-scale surveys of outcomes assessment practices in higher education institutions in the US. For example, in 2009 NILOA conducted a national survey of provosts from over 1,500 U.S. colleges and universities to ask about outcomes assessment drivers, methods, uses, and needs (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009). The purpose of the survey was to gain an overview of the state of outcomes assessment in undergraduate education in the US. A follow up survey was conducted five years later (Kuh et al., 2014). The 2014 survey found that 84% of U.S. higher education institutions are engaged in outcomes assessment – up 10% from 2009. It also found that accreditation is the primary driver of outcomes assessment, although internal drivers such as faculty interest and interest in program improvement are also important drivers (Kuh et al., 2014).

A 2010 survey by NILOA (Ewell et al., 2011) asked program chairs questions similar to those in the 2009 survey; however, this study sought to gain the perspective of program heads and focused on outcomes assessment at the program level. When compared to the 2009 survey,

the results of the 2010 survey revealed some interesting differences between program chairs' and provosts' perspectives. For example, program chairs indicated that program and institutional improvement and faculty interest were the primary drivers of assessment followed by accreditation expectations. (Accreditation had been the most important driver according to the provosts in the 2009 survey.) Program chairs also indicated different needs to improve assessment practices. While provosts had indicated that greater faculty involvement was needed, program chairs were satisfied with the level of faculty involvement, but indicated greater need for support from above in the form of faculty release time, stipends, and faculty expertise. In short, NILOA's surveys revealed a perception gap between program chairs and provosts. The survey also found differences in assessment practices between types of programs, noting that assessment practices in programs with professional accreditation tended to differ from those without, and that assessment practices in different programs varied and reflected the different modes of inquiry used in different disciplines.

In addition to surveys, NILOA has also conducted a number of qualitative studies. For example, Provezis (2010) conducted a study of the policies and practices of regional accrediting organizations with regard to outcomes assessment. The study included interviews and site visits at seven regional accrediting bodies, as well as extensive document analysis. Provezis found that standards and expectations for outcomes assessment were quite similar across regions, and that concerns about assessment were frequent reasons for requiring follow-up actions during the accreditation process.

Best Practices Research

There is substantial assessment literature focusing on best practices, and although traditionally much of the best practices literature was anecdotal, in recent years, a few scholars

have begun to take a more systematic approach to identifying best practices for assessment. For example, Bresciani's (2006) book on outcomes assessment-based program review is based on a multi-method research study. Bresciani invited 43 institutions, recommended by assessment experts as institutions engaged in effective assessment practice, to participate in a survey regarding their assessment practices and submit a description of an example of good assessment practice taking place at the institution. The book summarizes the findings from the study, identifying nine criteria for good practice[5] and describing the various ways in which participating institutions addressed these criteria. Additionally, Baker, Jankowski, Provezis, and Kinzie (2012) conducted a multiple case study of assessment use for NILOA. Nine colleges and universities were selected as case study sites because they were recommended by assessment experts or organizations (e.g. CHEA) as good practice institutions, and because they represented a range of institution types. The study used telephone interviews and document analysis to determine common assessment practices across institutions. Among the effective practices of participating institutions, Baker et al. (2012, p. 3) found that these institutions:

- took advantage of calls for accountability to leverage internal improvement efforts;
- communicated widely about assessment efforts and results;
- took time to reflect on their assessment activities and results;
- aligned their assessment work with organizational structures and cultures;
- focused their assessment efforts on specific problems or questions.

[5] Bresciani's criteria are (1) Clear understanding of goals and expectations for program review, (2) collaboration, (3) use of results, (4) awards and recognition, (5) resources to support program review, (6) coordination of the process, (7) flexibility, (8) addressing barriers, and (9) an evaluation of the program review process.

Assessment Research at the Program Level

Unfortunately, there are few research studies of assessment practices at the program level. Although the practitioner-oriented literature on assessment at the program level has increased in recent years, and there is growing recognition of the extent of assessment activity happening at the program level, there remains little systematic research that can shed light on assessment implementation and impact at the program level. What little research exists tends to focus on professional programs as they respond to new accreditation standards from professional accrediting organizations. Some studies have looked at the processes programs have put in place as they respond to accreditation requirements (e.g., Sinning & Dykxhoorn, 2001), but these studies tend to look at responses to changes in accreditation standards in general and do not focus specifically on assessment. Moreover, even within the professional literature there are few research studies that look at the impact of assessment. An exception to this is the Engineering Change study (Lattuca et al., 2006), a three-year research project conducted at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University. I describe the Engineering Change study in considerable detail below because it is one of the few studies to investigate specific program-level impacts, and because I have adapted its conceptual model for use in this study.

The Engineering Change Study

The Engineering Change study investigated whether ABET's (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) shift in accreditation emphasis from inputs to learning outcomes assessment had an impact on student learning in accredited engineering programs. In revising its accreditation standards, referred to as EC2000, ABET identified 11 learning outcomes for all engineering programs. These outcomes were intended to ensure that in addition to technical knowledge, students developed skills such as problem solving, team work, communication skills,

etc. Using surveys, the researchers collected data from thousands of participants, including 4,330 graduating seniors, 5,336 alumni, 1,243 faculty and 147 program chairs from 40 campuses. The questionnaires asked about changes to instructional planning and practices, in-class and out-of-class activities, and student learning related to the 11 learning outcomes. 1,622 employers were also surveyed and asked to assess the abilities of new employees relevant to the learning outcomes (Lattuca et al., 2006).

The Engineering Change model. The Engineering Change study used an analytical framework to break down how the new outcomes and outcomes assessment practice were expected to lead to changes in student learning. The Engineering Change framework posits that as a result of EC2000, engineering departments will make program changes aimed at aligning instructional practices with ABET's 11 student learning outcomes in EC2000 and meeting EC2000's emphasis on assessment and continuous improvement. The program changes will then impact in-class and out-of-class experiences for students, which will enhance student learning (Lattuca et al., 2006). Figure 2.1 shows the model for the Engineering Change study.

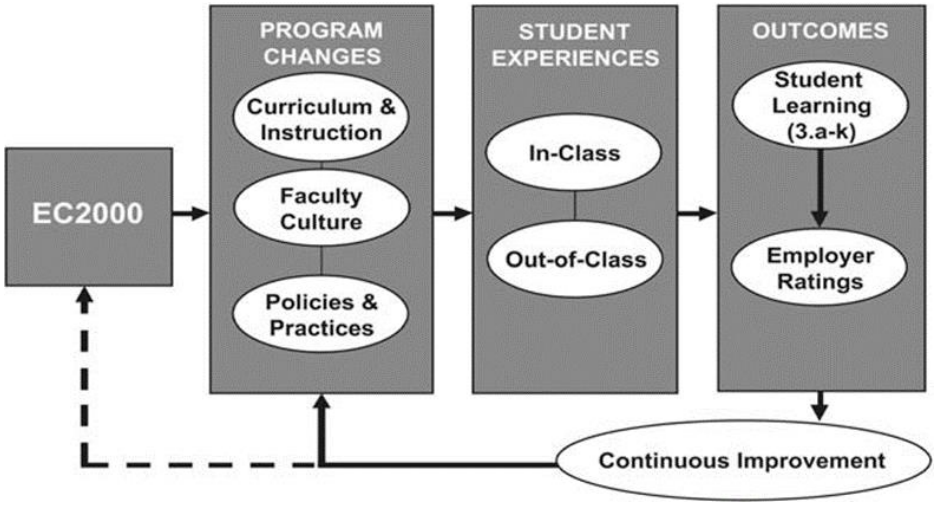

Figure 2.1. The Engineering Change model. From "More Than Meets the Eye: Curricular and Programmatic Effects on Student Learning," by A. D. Lambert, P. T. Terenzini, and L. R. Lattuca, 2007, *Research in Higher Education, 8*(2), p. 144. Copyright 2007 by Springer. Reprinted with permission.

The model divides program changes into three categories: curriculum and instruction, faculty culture, and administrative policies and practices. Curriculum and instruction refers to changes to the subject matter taught in a program as well as the instructional methods used in the program. This could include new emphasis on certain topics in the curriculum, such as professional ethics or technical writing, as well as the use of new instructional methods such as techniques to promote active learning. Faculty culture refers to shifts in attitudes and practices among the faculty. This includes changes in faculty attitudes toward continuous improvement efforts, the use of assessment information in curriculum planning, and faculty participation in professional development activities related to teaching. Policies and practices refers to the extent to which teaching and assessment are considered in administrative decisions related to the faculty reward system (e.g., hiring, promotion, and tenure).

Student experiences are divided into two categories: in-class and out-of-class experiences. In-class experiences refers to activities and practices in students' engineering courses, which are grouped into three sub-categories: experiences related to instructor clarity and organization, collaborative learning, and instructor interaction and feedback. The out-of-class experiences include experiences related to: participation in an internship or practicum, participation in overseas travel or study abroad, involvement in design competitions, involvement in student professional associations, and the program diversity climate. The categories for student experiences were developed for their presumed relevance to the EC2000 student learning outcomes.

Study results. Researchers found that there had been significant changes to engineering programs since EC2000 had been established, and that EC2000 had a small but broad and significant impact on student learning (Lattuca et al., 2006). The study found that in-class

experiences tended to have the most consistent and strongest impact on learning outcomes, while out-of-class experiences had a smaller but still significant influence. Moreover, the study concluded that the role of any single factor is quite small, and rather it is a network of multiple factors that is important when investigating impact. The Engineering Change study is important because it is one of the few studies that shows systematic evidence of a link between accreditation-oriented outcomes-assessment, programmatic changes, and improvements in student learning (Volkwein, Lattuca, Harper, & Domingo, 2007). The study is also important because it provides a conceptual model for exploring how outcomes assessment is expected to lead to improved student learning at the program level, linking program and faculty changes to student learning experiences, which in turn affect learning outcomes. In doing so, the study provides a useful framework for examining how programs "close the loop."

It is important to recognize that there are a number of limitations to this study, particularly with regard to its applicability to programs without professional accreditation. EC 2000 included 11 student learning outcomes that all engineering programs seeking accreditation must address; and the Engineering Change study focused on impact relevant to those 11 outcomes. However, regional accreditation does not specify learning outcomes for programs; it requires that programs develop their own learning outcomes for their students. It is not clear how this difference would influence the implementation and impact of outcomes assessment on programs with regional, but not professional accreditation requirements (Volkwein et al., 2007).

Another limitation is the fact that multiple forces may have been at work affecting change in engineering programs during the time period studied; however, the study design assumes that accreditation-oriented outcomes assessment is the primary driver of change. In their discussion of the study, Volkwein et al. (2007) recognize that "additional external and internal influences

also shape engineering programs" and further state:, "Rather than the sole influence, EC2000 accreditation is an important driver in a set of convergent factors … that influence educational activities and learning in engineering programs" (p. 278).

Finally, the study mainly uses large-scale surveys with selected-response items to gather data on multiple factors and outcomes. In choosing this method, the researchers acknowledge that they sacrifice depth for breadth. That is, they are limited by practicalities, particularly survey length, with regard to how deep they can examine program features, experiences, and outcomes (Lattuca et al., 2006). Moreover, while the study is effective in ascertaining the impact of EC2000 according to anticipated changes and outcomes, it does not allow for unanticipated impacts.

Research Summary

The various studies mentioned above have done a great deal to expand our knowledge and understanding of assessment. The NILOA studies have provided much needed information on the general state of outcomes assessment in the US, what drives it, and what instruments are being used. The best practices studies have served to provide useful examples for practitioners, particularly at the institutional level. The Engineering Change study confirms that outcomes assessment has some impact on student learning in the context of an accredited professional program. However, there is a great deal that still needs to be learned about assessment, its implementation and impacts. More in-depth program-level research can contribute considerably to our understanding of assessment and challenges assessment practitioners face such as "closing the loop."

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Conceptual Model

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the process and impacts of assessment at the academic program level in higher education. Specifically, it investigates how assessment links to changes in teaching and learning. To guide the development of the research questions and study design, I used the Engineering Change framework described in the previous chapter. In the Engineering Change study, Lattuca et al. (2006) assert that in order to understand the impact of assessment on student learning, researchers first need to look at program changes. They posit that in addition to curriculum and instruction, assessment may also impact faculty culture and program policies and practices. All of these program changes reshape student experiences, which should result in enhanced student learning. The model, therefore, establishes a sequence of events in which program changes lead to changes in student experiences which lead to changes in student learning.

However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Lattuca et al. (2006) recognized that their study had limitations, particularly with regard to its applicability to programs that do not have professional accreditation or externally-specified outcomes. Moreover, the study only looked at anticipated impacts, using a large-scale survey with selected response items. While their method was able to confirm that outcomes assessment enhanced student learning in the specific context of accredited engineering programs, it did not allow researchers much opportunity to explore the various impacts in depth or consider unanticipated impacts and learning outcomes. To apply the model to a program without professional accreditation or externally-determined student learning outcomes, I modified the original model to allow for possibility of multiple assessment activities

and unanticipated learning outcomes (Figure 3.1). Yet, even the slightly modified model was only intended to serve as a starting point, and it was expected that the model could change considerably over the course of the study. This would allow for more exploration of unanticipated impacts in the various stages of the model.

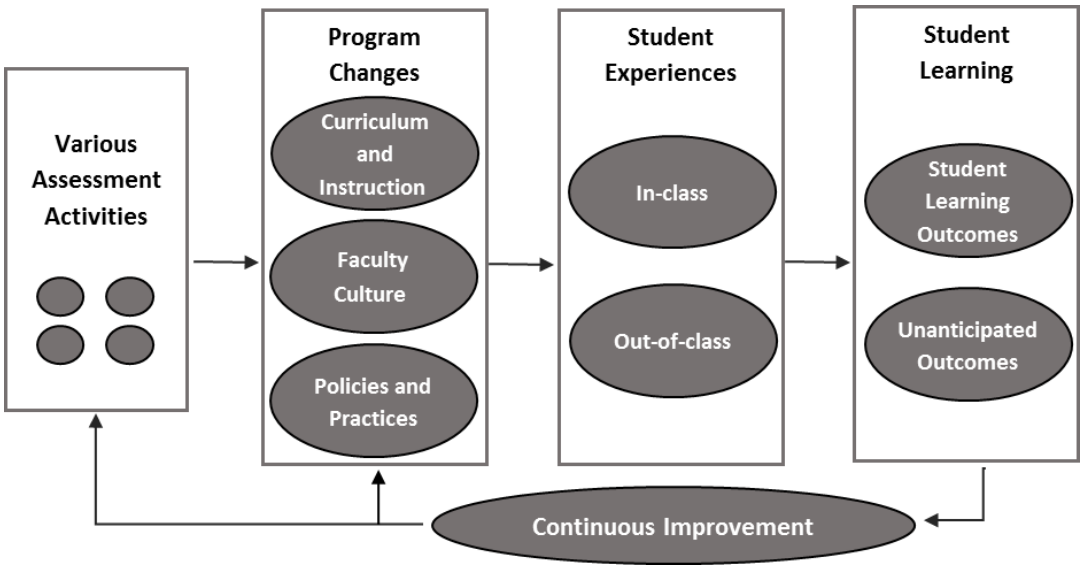

Figure 3.1. Modified model used for the BA in AL case study.

Research Questions

Based on the Engineering Change framework, the following three research questions were developed to address the overarching question: How does program assessment impact an academic program in higher education?

1. In what ways does program assessment impact policies, practices, culture, and curriculum in an academic program?
2. In what ways is program assessment perceived as impacting student educational experiences in an academic program?

3. In what ways (if at all) is program assessment perceived as improving student learning in an academic program?

Contextual Considerations

An important consideration in the design of the study was the broader evaluation context of academic programs in higher education. As explained in chapter one, academic programs today face multiple evaluation pressures and needs which are both externally and internally driven. These include activities related to program review, accreditation, assessment, and additional program (or institutional) development and evaluation needs. While many of these activities overlap and complement each other, others may compete or conflict with each other. Patton (2008) points out the importance of understanding the evaluation history of a program when conducting an evaluation, noting that a program's prior experiences with evaluation as well as the program's current various monitoring and evaluation activities can affect how a particular evaluation is conducted. Therefore, in designing this study, I took the position that when investigating program-level assessment and its impacts, it was important to also consider the broader evaluation context of the program. The overarching question: How does the assessment process fit within the larger evaluation context of an academic program in higher education? also guided my approach to the study.

Research Method - Case Study

With the above considerations in mind, the research method I chose for the study was a qualitative case study. Case study is a research method that studies a complex phenomenon in depth, in its 'real life' context, and using a variety of data sources (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Case study research is useful for gaining insight into complex processes and interactions within a particular phenomenon (i.e., case) as a means of better understanding the phenomenon as a

whole (Merriam, 1998). Drawing information from multiple data sources, case study research also allows for multiple perspectives enabling the researcher to gain insight into how various participants perceive and experience a phenomenon. According to Merriam (1998):

> A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research. (p. 19)

Using a case study research method was particularly appropriate to this study because it allowed me to study program assessment in depth, in a real-world context, incorporating the perspectives of various program participants. Moreover, the case study design allowed me to investigate both assessment processes and impacts and the links between the various processes and impacts. By using case study as a research method, I was able to go beyond isolated variables (Yin, 2012) to glean a more complete understanding of how the pieces fit together and how program assessment impacts a program.

Type of Case Study.

Yin (2009, 2012) divides case studies into three types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. An exploratory case study takes place in the preliminary stage of an investigation and precedes the main investigation. It helps the researcher to focus the study, generate theory, or try out data collection methods for the main investigation. A descriptive case study answers the question "What is happening or has happened?" (Yin, 2012, p. 5). It presents as complete a picture of the phenomenon and context as possible (Richards, 2011). An explanatory case study answers the question, "How or why did something happen?" (Yin, 2012, p. 5). Explanatory case studies move one step beyond describing the case to seeking explanations for how or why events

happen and often address linkages or cause and effect (Richards, 2011). This study was an explanatory case study. While it also addressed the question of "What is happening?", its final goal was to contribute to a better understanding of how assessment practice leads to improved teaching and learning.

Case Selection

The "case" in case study research is the phenomenon being studied and its context (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). A case can be an individual, a program, an event, a process, a group of people, an organization, or even a country. Depending on the purpose of the research and the research question, there are many bases for selecting a case in case study research. For example, a particular case may be selected because it is considered typical or representative of other cases, because it is a unique or extreme case, because there is maximum variation within the case, or because it is a critical incident (Yin, 2009). However, case study methodologists warn against too much emphasis on representativeness, and rather stress that a case should be chosen based on its ability to shed light on the phenomenon of interest (Richards, 2011). In this way, case selection is different from sampling that is done for other research methods such as experimental or survey research methods. The researcher is not aiming for statistical generalization and therefore is not concerned with representative or random sampling. Rather, the researcher selects one case based on how much she thinks can be learned by studying that particular case. Patton (2015) and Merriam (1998) call this *purposeful sampling*. Merriam explains, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61).

Practical, ethical, and theoretical considerations all play a role in the selection of a case. No matter how "information-rich" (Patton, 2015, p. 46) a case may seem, if the researcher does not have access to key participants and data sources relevant to the topic, then there may be little that can be learned from the case. Lack of access could be due to a variety of factors such as problems with gatekeepers, timing, distance, or resources. On the other hand, while there may be a case that is convenient, with easy access to participants and data sources, if there is little happening with regard to the phenomenon of interest then the researcher may not have much to study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the ideal case is one where:

> (a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present; (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; (d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and (e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured. (p. 106)

The case I selected for the proposed study was the new BA in Applied Linguistics program at APU[6]. I selected this program because it was engaged in a variety of evaluation and assessment activities that made it likely to be a rich source of information, and because as someone working part-time in the program, I already had a trusting relationship with key faculty and staff in the program. Therefore, I felt a great deal could be learned from my investigation of this case. My interactions with the faculty and staff also gave me confidence that the study could be conducted ethically and in a way that could assure the quality and credibility of the data.

[6] APU stands for Anonymous Pacific University, a pseudonym.

Binding the Case

Because cases are often multi-layered and complex, it is important to "bind" the case as a way to manage the scope of a study. Binding the case means putting boundaries on a study to decide what will and will not be studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It can be done by specifying time, events, location, distinguishing characteristics, or defining terms (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It is also useful to state what is not part of the case (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, the issue or topic of interest was program-level assessment practice in a university academic program. The specific case was program assessment practice in the BA in Applied Linguistics program. The concept of program assessment as it was used in this study has been defined in chapter one. The case was limited to assessment-related activities and their impacts in one BA in AL program. It did not include assessment practices for other programs in the AL Department such as the graduate or co-curricular programs. Larger evaluation needs of the university were included only in so far as they influenced and provided context for the program's assessment practice. With regard to time, the case focused on assessment activities that took place from spring semester 2014 through spring semester 2016. This was the time period when (a) the program decided to prioritize assessment in order to meet requirements for the application for established status and program review, and (b) I was engaged as a part-time assessment specialist to assist the program with assessment and its application for established status.

Data Collection Procedures

Case study research uses data from multiple sources and multiple data collection methods. The multiple methods and sources serve to triangulate data and help provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and context. Typical data collection methods include document review, individual or focus group interviews, direct observations, participant

observations, and questionnaires (Creswell, 2007; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Yin, 2009). In this study, the following data collection methods were used: document review, participant observation, and interviews. Each of these is explained in more detail below. Data collection began in May 2015 (when I obtained university institutional review board (IRB) approval) and continued in full until August 2016, with breaks during the summers when participants were not available. Some follow-up interviews and member checking took place in the fall of 2016 and early 2017. Also, I was given access to some documents written before May 2015, such as the initial program proposal, BA committee meeting minutes, agendas and other documents, etc.

Document review. Documents used in document review include a wide range of written and visual material used for communication (Merriam, 1998). These may be personal documents or public records, and include but are not limited to newspaper articles, informational brochures and public relations materials, historical documents, test results, textbooks, diaries, minutes of meetings, agendas, progress reports, webpages, and emails. Documents can provide important details and background information about a case and corroborate evidence from other sources (Yin, 2009). In this study, documents provided important information regarding the background and context of the program, the evaluation history of the program, the specific assessment activities that the program engaged in, and changes that took place in the program as a result of assessment activities. The following types of documents were used the study:

- The department's original proposal to create the BA program and the program's self-study/application for established status. These documents included useful information on the program's mission, curriculum, and organizational structure, etc.;

- Copies of assessment and evaluation reports related to the program (e.g. annual assessment reports for the university assessment office, the college exit survey, etc.);
- Minutes, agendas, and notes from BA committee meetings;
- Handouts, PowerPoint presentations, surveys, and other documents used for BA program assessment activities and curriculum workshops;
- Course syllabi and other course documents provided by instructors in the BA program to show examples of course changes;
- University and department webpages for contextual information;
- Email communications between myself and BA committee members.

Participant observation. Participant observation is a mode of observation in which the researcher is not just an observer, but actually participates in the events being studied (Yin, 2009). The extent of participation in a qualitative study can vary widely. Marshall and Rossman (2016) and Patton (2015) describe a continuum of participation where the researcher's role can range from full participant on one end to detached observer on the other. There are several advantages to participant observation: First, the researcher is involved in and experiences events first hand and is able to learn from and report on her own experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Also, participant observers are often able to build trusting relationships with other participants which can lead to more effective interviews and less disruption during observations. Furthermore, during their time spent in the field participating, researchers often have opportunities to engage in informal interviews, encounter documents and artifacts, and observe events that more detached observers with limited time in the research setting may miss. At the same time, it is important to recognize the weaknesses of participant observation: Recording data and remembering to observe while participating in an event can be a challenge – while

participating, the researcher may not have time or opportunity to record events or ask questions. Also, as the researcher becomes involved in the case, there is the potential for bias and even the manipulation of events which could distort findings (Yin, 2009).

In this study, I worked as a part-time assessment specialist for the BA in AL program while conducting research. Therefore, I was a participant observer with a high degree of "participantness" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) In this capacity, I gained first-hand experience with the BA program's assessment activities, had access to a wide array of documents, was able to build trusting relationships with participants, and in addition to attending formal meetings and events, engaged in informal interactions and meetings with program faculty and staff. However, because of my involvement in events, it was important to take extra care recording data.

To record data during participant observation, I audio recorded the formal committee meetings and workshops which I participated in. I sometimes supplemented the audio recordings with brief field notes and/or reflective memos after a session. The audio recording could not capture some of the small group discussions during workshops, so I made more extensive field notes after those workshops. A total of four committee meetings and two workshops were recorded between May 2015 and May 2016. In September 2016, I discontinued audio recording the committee meetings, but continued to make notes during and after meetings if new information relevant to the study was mentioned.

To keep records of smaller, less formal meetings, I used contact summary forms. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) recommend contact summary forms to help the researcher manage and focus data from field work. A contact summary form is a one-page document with some focus questions about interactions with a field contact. The researcher answers each question briefly to develop an overall summary of the main points in the contact. I found contact

summary forms particularly useful for keeping track of my meetings and interactions with the program coordinator, but also used them after chatting with some instructors. The questions I used as the basic template for the contact summary forms were taken from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014, p. 124):

1. What people, events, or situations were involved?
2. What were the main themes or issues in the contact?
3. Which research questions and which variable in the initial framework did the contact bear on most centrally?
4. What new assertions, propositions, hypotheses, speculations, or hunches about the field situations were suggested by the contact?
5. Where should the field-worker place most energy during the next contact, and what kinds of information should be sought?

Interviews. Kahn and Cannell define an interview as a "conversation with a purpose" (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). Interviews are useful for finding out information that cannot be directly observed by the researcher or found in documents. Patton (2015) explains:

> We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 426)

Formal, in-depth interviewing played an important role in this case study. It provided information on practices and events for which I was not present as well as background information on the context and evaluation history of the program. Just as importantly,

interviewing provided insight into the perspectives of faculty and staff regarding assessment activities and their impacts on the BA program. Semi-structured interview protocols were used to guide the interviews. (See Appendix A for sample protocols.)

Early interviews with the program coordinator and department chair focused on gathering information about the program's broader evaluation context, identifying the program's various evaluation activities, and identifying which of the evaluation activities were being used for program assessment. Rogers (2005) and Burke (2005) suggest that to better understand evaluation for accountability purposes, we need to ask the questions, "Who is required to answer to whom, concerning what, through what means, and with what consequences?" (Rogers, 2005, p. 2). Adapting this to allow for non-accountability oriented evaluation activities, I used the following paraphrase of Rogers for guiding the development of interview questions: Who is being evaluated by whom, concerning what, through what means, and with what consequences? Further questions then probed into their perspectives as instructors in the program and asked how these individuals perceived the activities as impacting student educational experiences and learning.

In order to gain multiple perspectives, I interviewed several instructors in the program. For practical reasons, I could not interview every instructor in the program; however, I made an effort to include a range: faculty and GAs, BA Committee members and nonmembers. A total of 12 individuals were interviewed in ten separate sessions. (Five GAs were interviewed together as a focus group in one session. The program coordinator was interviewed twice, and one GA from the focus group was interviewed in an individual follow-up interview.) Table 3.1 shows dates of the interviews and the types of interview participants. Individual interviews tended to last

approximately 45 minutes. Some were closer to 30 minutes, others lasted about an hour. The focus group interview lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Table 3.1. *Interview Schedule*

Date	Interview participant
10/23/15	Program Coordinator / BA Committee member
04/07/16	(2 interviews)
11/13/15	Department Chair / BA Committee member
03/23/16	Faculty / BA Committee member
04/20/16	GA / BA Committee member
04/20/16	GA / BA Committee member
05/25/16	Focus group interview of 5 GAs / Not on the BA Committee
08/30/16	Faculty / Not on the BA Committee
08/31/16	GA not on the BA Committee
11/02/16	GA / BA Committee member

One of the strengths of qualitative research is that it allows for emergent design (Patton, 2001, 2015; Simons, 2009). In fact, Patton (2001) argues, "A qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry" (p. 255). Duff (2008) and Yin (2009) also recognize the need for case study researchers to be flexible and respond to "the unfolding data and situation" (Duff, 2008, p. 113). In this study, specific interview questions were developed and adapted when new information came to light about the evaluation context and the program engaged in new assessment activities. Interview questions were also adapted to accommodate each participant's role and experience with the program. Thus, while semi-structured interview protocols were developed for instructor interviews, a different protocol was developed for each instructor. The following general questions based on the study's research questions were used for to guide the development of instructor interview protocols.

- Which assessment activities in the program are instructors aware of?

- How do instructors view the assessment activities as affecting the curriculum and instruction/ faculty culture / policies and practices in the program?
- Have instructors made any changes to their courses or teaching practices? If so, what prompted those changes?
- How do instructors view the assessment activities as affecting the learning experiences and outcomes for students?

The original study design included interviewing BA students or recent graduates from the BA program to provide a student perspective on changes to learning experiences and outcomes. However, during the study, the information and findings indicated changes that it would be difficult for students to comment on, and for this reason I decided not to interview student. (This is discussed further in the chapters five and six). At the same time, I added two unplanned interviews with GAs (interviews dated 8/31/16 and 11/02/16) when interactions with these GAs indicated new information worth following up on in longer interviews. All interviews except one were audio recorded and transcribed. One participant asked not to be audio recorded and I took notes instead.

Data Analysis

I coded the data for categories using content analysis. While some researchers view content analysis as quantitatively oriented – a means of quantifying qualitative data through frequency counts (Merriam, 1998; Wilkinson, 2011) – others approach it from a more qualitative perspective and describe it as systematically analyzing data by looking for recurring instances, themes, or patterns. (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Wilkinson, 2011). For example, Patton (2015) defines content analysis as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a

volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning" (p. 541). In this study, I used the more qualitative approach to content analysis.

Rossman and Rallis (2003) assert that although approaches to qualitative analysis are often described as either inductive or deductive, most qualitative studies actually fall on a continuum somewhere in between the two extremes. While this study started with a deductive approach to analysis, it also allowed for inductive coding. First, I used the categories from the Engineering Change study to create initial codes. I also used pattern matching (Yin, 2009), a technique which "compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one" (p. 136) and compared information emerging from the study to the pattern of the Engineering Change model. However, when new categories and patterns emerged during the study, I created new categories and then adjusted the model. (See Appendix B for the initial code list and the final code list. The model as a whole is discussed in chapter six.) The code list was multi-level code tree consisting of parent and child codes. For example, "program changes" was a parent code of "faculty culture" which was a parent code of "faculty involvement" and "using information for planning."

In qualitative research, data analysis often takes place concurrently with data collection and writing (Merriam, 1998). In the process of collecting, transcribing, and organizing data, the researcher begins the initial analysis of the data and analysis in turn informs further data collection resulting in an iterative process. This iterative process was an important aspect of the study. Analysis of existing documents or transcripts influenced questions for upcoming interviews. When new categories and patterns emerged from recent interviews or observations, old transcripts and documents were re-analyzed and re-coded. The writing process also prompted further analysis, and necessitated a number of follow-up interviews or communications as writing and analysis raised new questions or required more details.

Data Management and Analysis Software

In addition to Microsoft Word, I used two software programs to aid in data management and analysis. I used the transcription software Inqscribe (www.inqscribe.com) to transcribe audio recordings. Inqscribe allows the researcher to easily insert timestamps, and snippets (e.g. "laughter") while transcribing data. I inserted time stamps with each change of speaker during an audio recording. This made it easy to later go back and find excerpts or place them within the context of the discussion when necessary. All transcriptions, along with other notes, were then imported into the online qualitative and mixed methods software application Dedoose (www.dedoose.com), which I used to organize, code, and analyze data. Dedoose facilitates data management and analysis by allowing the researcher to label media, highlight and code text, create and code memos, and then search and extract data based on the labels, codes, and memos associated with it. For example, after importing media (e.g. an interview transcript) into Dedoose, I was able to attach descriptors to the media such as the type of interaction (interview), and role of the participant (GA), etc. Reading through the text, I then highlighted and coded the text excerpts using codes I created (e.g. "Bigger picture"). I also created memos in Dedoose which I could also code and attach to excerpts or to the piece of media as a whole. Using Dedoose, I could then search the text by code and/or descriptor and extract and export the data to Microsoft Word or Excel. In this way, I was able to analyze data and look for patterns. I also found that Dedoose greatly facilitated the iterative process as it allowed me to easily change code names and rearrange the code tree as necessary.

Member Checking

Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is considered an important validation strategy for qualitative research. It "involves taking data, analyses,

interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). Member checking occurs throughout a study and can be formal or informal. During the beginning stages of the study, the researcher may take initial data, interpretations, and analyses to individual participants and ask for their feedback. The participants can correct, clarify, elaborate on, or offer their own interpretations of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As the study progresses, the researcher may also choose to form focus groups of participants to review analyses and emerging findings (Creswell, 2007). The feedback from participants not only helps guard against misinterpretations or inaccuracies, but it can also lead to new insights and findings for the study.

During the study, I conducted both informal and formal member checking. Informal member checking took place after interviews. If during the transcription or coding of the interview data, I decided more information was needed to clarify interpretations, I used short informal communications (in person or via email) to ask the participant to elaborate on an idea. As the study progressed, I conducted more formal member checking. During a BA Committee meeting I presented the preliminary findings of the study to committee members for their feedback. This step proved extremely useful as committee members were able to provide new insights on the findings which prompted further data collection. I also submitted sections of the findings chapter to individuals if I used substantial amounts of their information. For instance, if I used materials from an instructor's class as an example of impact or if I quoted an instructor extensively in a section of the findings, I asked the instructor to review that section before I finalized it. I also provided drafts of all chapters to the program coordinator for review. The program coordinator provided useful corrections and comments on both the context and findings chapters, and further clarified details where necessary. Finally, a member of the AL Department

who was *not* involved in the BA assessment process reviewed several chapters of this study and served as a "critical friend" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As a senior member of the department, the individual was able to check information in the context chapter regarding the department and institution. As an outsider not involved in the assessment process, he was able to read the findings and discussion from a detached perspective and check that the inferences and interpretations seemed logical (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). It should be noted that none of the participants who were asked to review the information in the study ever attempted to censor information. They corrected details, raised questions, and offered thoughtful insights, but never asked that I exclude information.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2007) and Rossman and Rallis (2003)emphasizes the importance of being sensitive to ethical considerations throughout the research process. Below I discuss the ethical considerations particularly salient to this study and the steps I took to address them. They include: permission and consent, privacy and confidentiality, reciprocity, and subjectivity and bias.

Permission and Informed Consent

Because this study was of an academic program, it was important to receive permission from the program and the department in which it was housed, as well as the informed consent of individuals participating in the study. I initially met with and submitted a very brief research proposal to the department chair and the BA program coordinator, who reviewed and approved the proposal. The proposal was then submitted to the Department Personnel and Policy Committee (DPPC), which approved the study. Next, I developed a more detailed research proposal and obtained permission from the university's institutional review board to conduct the

research. The department chair and program coordinator received copies of the final research proposal so that they were aware of all aspects of the planned study. I obtained informed consent from all individual participants who participated in interviews, the focus group, meetings, or workshops. Participants who consented to participate in the study were also given a choice to be audio-recorded or not. One interview participant declined to be audio-recorded but allowed for notetaking. All other participants agreed to be audio-recorded.

Privacy and Confidentiality

I took a number of steps to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of those involved in the study. The names of the institution, department, and programs were changed to pseudonyms, including the name of the BA in Applied Linguistics program. The original name of the program was similar in meaning, but used more distinctive terminology. Any mention of the state, institution, or program in the text was edited so that names and identifying information were removed, this includes program documents in the appendices. References to some documents are necessarily vague, for example, university webpages are cited without URL links. In addition, it has been necessary to change some office and job titles, and in some cases to obfuscate roles and relationships.

With privacy and confidentiality in mind, I chose not to use names or even pseudonyms when referring to individuals in the program. Rather, I referred to individuals by their relevant roles, for example, as GAs, faculty, committee members, etc. Some instructors were proud of the work they were doing and asked that they be named in the study. However, I decided not to name them as it could (a) reveal the identity of the program, and (b) reveal the identity of other participants through the process of elimination. The program coordinator played an important role in the BA program and had a unique perspective. It would have been inappropriate to label

his contributions generically as coming from “a faculty member.” At the same time, I was concerned that readers connected with the program might identify him. The program coordinator and I discussed this possibility, and this is one reason I gave the program coordinator the chance to read and give feedback on all chapters. Indeed, recognizing that despite my best efforts to protect privacy it still may be possible to identify either individual participants or the program, I felt member checking was an important extra step to ensure that participants were comfortable with the information being written about them and their program.

As I do not refer to participants by name, I do not include participant names in the personal communication citations either. For example, a citation may just say, “personal communication, May 25, 2016.” A reference list of personal communications has been provided as Appendix C. This list shows the kind of communication linked to each date, that is, whether the personal communication was an interview with a GA, a BA Committee meeting, etc. Readers can refer to this list for more information on each personal communication citation. The APA Style Blog (Lee & Hume-Pratuch, 2013) notes that when there is tension between retrievability and confidentiality, participant confidentiality should take precedence. For this reason, I have not given more details on personal communications.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity, or giving back to research participants, is an important consideration in any research method. In a qualitative case study where participants may be asked to invest in close relationships with the researcher, give considerable time to the researcher’s study, open their homes or workplaces to observation, or divulge sensitive information, reciprocity is a particularly important consideration (Hatch, 2002). Saldaña (2015) asserts,

> Remember that the root meaning of *datum* is something given, not something collected. Anything your participants give you in the form of interviews, observation opportunities, documents, and so on, should be seen not just as data but as gifts. They are giving the researcher, most often voluntarily, their time, knowledge, experiences, and insights. (p. 81)

As a researcher, it was important to me that the program and individual participants benefit from the research. I therefore addressed reciprocity in a number of ways: I offered voluntary assistance to the BA program in addition to the paid expertise I provided; I presented the findings of the study to key program staff so that they could use them for program improvement; and I offered compensation for interview time. Each of these is explained in detail below.

Voluntary assistance. For a year and a half, I was employed as a part-time assessment specialist with the program to assist it with its self-study and application for established status. However, even after the application was complete, I continued to work with the program on a voluntary basis. For one semester, this included a considerable amount of work on activities related to curriculum review, such as planning and conducting a curriculum workshop. In later semesters, the work has been less intensive, but includes contributing to BA Committee meetings, consulting with the program coordinator on assessment matters, and helping the BA program plan next steps for assessment efforts. At the time of writing, I am still in touch with the program coordinator and occasionally provide advice on program assessment.

Presentation of findings. As preliminary findings emerged from the study, I shared them with participants in the study. This occurred informally in meetings and discussions with participants and formally when I presented preliminary findings to the BA Committee in a

meeting in September 2016. The presentation and discussion of findings was a form of member checking which allowed me to check information and interpretations. However, it was also intended to be useful to participants and aid them with future assessment and program planning. In the September 2016 meeting, the discussion of findings was organized around the following topics: How the program had benefitted from assessment and curriculum related activities, challenges and areas for improvement, and ideas for further action. One direct result of this discussion was a plan by the BA committee to provide more orientation information for new instructors in the BA program in the future.

Compensation. Individuals were compensated for the time given for interviews. All interview participants were offered a ten-dollar gift card to Starbucks (an on-campus coffee shop) as a gesture of appreciation for their time.

Subjectivity and Bias

Qualitative researchers recognize that subjectivity, "one's personal feelings, opinions, biases, preferences, values, attitudes, and beliefs" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 199), is a part of research. After all, it is often the experiences, opinions, and beliefs of an individual that motivate the individual to engage in the research in the first place. Thus, from a qualitative research perspective, it is not possible and sometimes not even desirable to avoid subjectivity, but it is important to consider how subjectivity has influenced the study. Saldaña (2015) asserts that subjectivity "is not something to be avoided completely, but it is necessary to know when it's present and, more importantly, when it's appropriate." Unchecked subjectivity can lead to "a too skewed perspective" or "biased slant" (p. 60) which can lead readers to doubt the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

This case study is designed to represent the perspectives and experiences of members of a university academic program who participated in program assessment practice. As a participant in the program's assessment practice, my perspective is also represented. However, as a researcher, it was important to me to take into consideration my subjectivity and how it could influence the study. Below, I discuss efforts I made to address my role and subjectivity, manage and mitigate bias, and ensure the credibility of the study. These steps included reflexivity, transparency, and a systematic and rigorous design.

Reflexivity. One step to addressing bias is to acknowledge potential biases and engage in reflexivity. According to Creswell (2007), "reflexivity means that the writer is conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study" (p. 243). Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity throughout a study, reflecting on how their biases, values, and experiences affect their choice of research topic, their approach to the research design, their interactions with participants, and their interpretations of data. Reflexivity was an important component of the research process for me from the initial design stage to the final write up. Field notes, contact summary forms, analytic memos, and reflective papers (written for a research class) all incorporated aspects of self-reflection and helped me maintain an awareness of my own presence in the study. Discussing the research process with a colleague acting as a critical friend was also a useful technique for ensuring that I remained vigilant about my own role and potential biases (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Transparency. It is also useful for a qualitative researcher to be up front with the reader about how her background, role, and beliefs have influenced the study so that the reader is aware and can take this into account when reading the study. There are several ways that my background and professional role influenced the study, including my background as a teacher

and evaluation specialist and my status as the assessment specialist and employee in the program I was studying. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

My professional experience includes many years as an English language teacher, curriculum developer, and evaluation specialist in education. My experience working in evaluation influenced my choice of topic for the study. As an evaluation specialist, I believe in the potential of evaluation for program improvement purposes. However, I am also realistic about many of the challenges to implementing and using evaluation effectively in education programs. I chose to investigate assessment processes and impacts for this study because I was interested in helping evaluators better understand and address some of the challenges of evaluation practice. Also, my experience as an evaluation specialist influenced my focus on context in this study. My own experience corroborates claims by Patton (2008) and others (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Rog, 2012) that the evaluation history and context of a program can have a strong influence on how an evaluation is carried out. Thus, it was particularly important to me that the study incorporate context in the design.

My approach to the study design, with its high degree of "revealedness" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), and emphasis on member checking and reciprocity was influenced by my past experiences as a teacher and participant in education research. I can recall an occasion when after having opened my classroom to researchers to conduct observations, I never heard from the researchers again and was never informed in detail about the research purpose or findings. Now, as a scholar, I occasionally read research articles which make me question the extent to which the participating teachers were adequately informed of the study purpose or to what extent they would agree that their perspectives have been fairly represented in the study. For these reasons, it was important to me to have high levels of participant involvement in the initial study design, to

involve participants during the study in the form of member checking, and to always keep in mind how the study would affect the participants and the program.

Already in this chapter, I have mentioned my role as a participant observer and part-time assessment specialist in the program. It is important to acknowledge that in this capacity, I was an employee researching the site where I worked. This had advantages and disadvantages. Advantages included convenience, ease of access, relevance to professional interests, and insider knowledge and understanding (Punch, 2009, p. 44). However, potential disadvantages included a vested interest in certain results and concerns about professional relationships. Aware that these factors could affect the study, I took certain precautions: I designed the study so that the study was not dependent on the program achieving certain results; I involved key program members in the initial design of the study so that professional relationships were less likely to be strained later; and I explained to participants repeatedly that I was open to criticisms of the assessment process and negative responses were as valuable as positive responses. Through these strategies, I sought to minimize any of the potential problems that could arise from studying a program I was involved in and activities I was leading.

Systematic and rigorous design. Finally, built into the study design were steps to help ensure that the study was rigorously and systematically conducted. Rossman and Rallis (2003, p. 53) emphasize that while qualitative research may be subjective, it is not unsystematic. The research process is "deliberate and conscious; [the researcher's] decisions and actions should be explicated and displayed so that others may understand how the study was done and can assess its adequacy." In this study, I employed a number of strategies from Rossman and Rallis (2003) to ensure that the study was rigorous and systematic and help alleviate concerns about bias and credibility. These included: Clearly articulating the conceptual framework and methodology,

documenting the processes for gathering and analyzing data, providing thick description, using triangulation and multiple methods for data collection, and applying validation strategies such as member checking and using a critical friend.

CHAPTER 4. CONTEXT

Program Context

In case study research, the phenomenon being studied is situated in a real-world setting, and the researcher investigates and describes not just the phenomenon but the context as well. In this way, the researcher and reader can get a clear picture of how the phenomenon plays out in complex, real-world conditions (Yin, 2012). The detailed description of the case and its context also allows the reader to determine the applicability of the lessons learned from the case study to other settings and situations (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this section I provide background information about the university and department in which the program of interest, the BA in Applied Linguistics program, is located. I then provide detailed information about the BA program itself and discuss the various matters the BA Committee was occupied with during the time of this study. In this way, readers can gain a better understanding of the program and the circumstances surrounding the assessment processes and impacts described in later chapters.

University Profile

APU is a medium-sized public university, located in the Western United States, close to the Pacific Ocean. It is the flagship campus of a state system consisting of three universities and seven community colleges. The university is a land, sea, and space grant research institution, and is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a university with "very high research activity." Because of the university's location, the university emphasizes its connections to the Pacific region. It is known for its research programs in Asian and Pacific Islands languages and area studies, linguistics, applied linguistics, oceanography, and astronomy.

According to the university's "fast facts" page on its website, the university has approximately 19,000 students: 14,000 undergraduates and 5,000 graduate students.

Approximately 66% of the undergraduate student population comes from in state; however, all 50 states and 125 countries are represented among the student population. The student population is quite diverse (the largest demographic group being of Asian or Pacific Islander ancestry), and the university is classified by the US Department of Education as a minority-serving institution. Each year approximately 30% of new undergraduate students transfer from another university or community college.

As the state's flagship institution, APU juggles multiple goals: It strives to be a leading international research university, but at the same time to meet local education needs and make higher education as accessible as possible to in-state students. With regard to the university atmosphere and the undergraduate student body, more than one faculty member in the applied linguistics department has observed characteristics such as the following about APU:

> [APU is a] provincial university that's not elitist, has as part of its mission to make university education accessible to people who may otherwise not get a chance to get it, and as such, …in a university like ours, compared to a university like maybe Stanford or something, we have much more of a range of students. (personal communication, November 6, 2015)

As is the case with many public universities, APU has faced its share of financial concerns over the past decade. The economic recession beginning in 2008 affected the state budget, which in turn affected university finances. Between 2008 and 2014, the state legislature made substantial cuts in funding for APU. Tuition increases offset some of this loss of revenue for the university; however, declining enrollment numbers also took their toll. Thus, during this period, the university enacted a variety of cost cutting measures including, at different times, salary reductions and hiring freezes to address budget concerns.

For decades, APU has used a "historical" budget model for allocating most funds to colleges and departments. This model allocates funds based on previous years' funding levels regardless of program performance, size, growth, or other factors. In recent years, however, as financial concerns and cost-cutting measures have become more severe, this model has become increasingly contentious. Opponents argue that there is very little motivation to have a successful program as increased enrollments and activities only lead to a greater strain on resources, not additional funding. In 2015, a new model was approved by the Board of Regents and is now being piloted which allows for changes to how some tuition is distributed, taking into consideration factors such as number of majors, graduation rates, and student semester hours taught in a department.

Among the improvement initiatives APU has recently undertaken, one that is directly relevant to the BA in AL program is the effort to improve undergraduate student retention. In recent years, APU has initiated a number of strategies to increase graduation rates and address concerns about time needed to graduate. For example, in 2011, APU, in collaboration with other state universities and community colleges, created the "15 to Finish" campaign, which encouraged students to take at least 15 credits per semester and finish a Bachelor's degree in four years. (Prior to this, less than 20% of first-time, full-time freshmen graduated from APU in four years.) Additionally, academic programs have been asked to increase course availability so that more students can take needed courses; develop four-year degree plans to better guide students and ensure they could graduate in four years; and provide more departmental advising for pre- and declared majors rather than rely on the university's general advising center. The university

has also encouraged better articulation with community colleges and efforts to facilitate the transition of community college students to APU[7].

In short, APU faces a number of pressures common to many public doctoral universities today: It is a research-oriented university, struggling to fulfill a threefold mission of research, service, and teaching, while responding to continuing budget crises and increasing pressure to meet the needs of a diverse, undergraduate student population.

Department Profile

The BA in AL program is housed in the Department of Applied Linguistics. The department dates back to 1969 when it was founded as the Department of English as a Second Language (ESL). It originally offered an MA in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and housed the English Language Institute (ELI) which offered English language courses to international and immigrant university students who needed assistance with academic English. The department grew and evolved over the years to expand its focus beyond English language teaching and reflect changes in the field of second language learning and teaching: In 1999, the name of the department was changed to the Department of Applied Linguistics, which the department website describes as follows:

> Applied Linguistics investigates how people use, learn or lose another language, be it a second, third, heritage, or foreign language, or a pidgin or creole. Applied Linguistics is the study of multilingualism in all of its diversity.

Today, department faculty members represent a variety of approaches to Applied Linguistics: pedagogical, socio-cultural, psychological, linguistic, and anthropological.

[7] Reported in APU's 2015 Interim Report to the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

The department prides itself on being a leader in its field. It was the first of its kind in the US when it was established in 1969, it introduced a PhD program as early as 1989, and it has continued to lead the field in research and scholarship over the ensuing decades. Because of the department's strengths in research and scholarship, graduate faculty members typically have a 2-2 teaching load (two courses per semester) with the rest of the time allotted for research, graduate advising, and service.

The department now houses four degree and certificate programs in AL: PhD, AGC (Advanced Graduate Certificate), MA, and BA. The department also houses two co-curricular programs: the ELI, which teaches English language courses for admitted APU students, and the English Language Program (ELP) an intensive English language program for students not yet admitted to the university. Additionally, faculty work closely with three centers housed at APU: a resource center for foreign language teaching, a center for second language research, and a center for creole studies. The department has 13 graduate faculty members, eight faculty specialists and APT (Administrative, Professional, Technical) employees, and a number of affiliated faculty from other departments. The department also employs approximately 25 graduate assistants each semester who teach classes in the BA program, ELI, and ELP, or provide research or administrative support for programs or affiliated centers.

The AL Department is a large and active department with a strong history in second language research, teaching, and resource development. However, in recent years it has faced challenges. In addition to the regular turnover caused by the retirement of senior faculty members, the department has also lost mid-career faculty to competing institutions. Replacing faculty has been slow, in part because of the cost-cutting measures enacted by the university, and a consequence has been some gaps in expertise and extra responsibilities for remaining faculty

members. There is also increasing competition for students as the field of applied linguistics has grown internationally. This increased competition, combined with rising tuition and a high cost of living in the region has resulted in a drop in the number of MA students. However, to counter balance this, the PhD and BA programs have grown. Indeed, since its establishment in 2011, the new BA program has grown unexpectedly to become the largest degree program in the department, each year averaging between 80 and 90 declared majors.

Because of the department's history as a graduate department and its emphasis on research and scholarship, faculty are recruited primarily for their research and publishing potential, and these criteria are emphasized in tenure and promotion decisions. With the establishment and growth of the BA program, interest and experience in undergraduate teaching have become factors in the selection process for new faculty, but research and scholarship remain the priority (personal communication, November 13, 2013).

Faculty responses to the new undergraduate program have been mixed. Some senior faculty members emphasize that they are graduate faculty and show little interest in being involved in the undergraduate program, only reluctantly teaching courses when they are required to; others teach classes willingly, but have limited their involvement to only that responsibility; while others have been willing not only to teach, but to serve on committees, work with graduate teaching assistants, and become involved in program development. However, in general, because research and graduate education have long been the focal points of this department, the undergraduate program has been of peripheral interest to most faculty members.

A unique characteristic of the AL Department, and one quite relevant to the evaluation context of this study, is the department's strong background in assessment and evaluation as areas of study and research. The department has a number of professors known for their work in

language assessment, psychometrics, and program evaluation and a number of PhD and MA students specialize in these areas. One course that was offered to graduate students until 2012 was Language Program Evaluation[8]. Students in this course were trained in Patton's (2008) Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach to evaluation and conducted UFE projects, often studying components of AL Department programs for their evaluation projects. Graduate students in other AL classes also conduct research on testing, curriculum, and instruction in AL programs (usually the ELI and ELP). Thus, the department faculty and staff are familiar with the principles of assessment and evaluation, and are accustomed to supporting systematic inquiry into components of AL programs. When I began meeting with the BA program Coordinator and the BA Committee to discuss the outcomes assessment work that needed to be done, there was general support and a desire to engage in assessment that was meaningful and useful. Although some faculty questioned the requirement to focus on outcomes assessment given that other forms of evaluation and research were taking place and others were concerned about limited resources for assessment, faculty members were generally familiar with and supportive of assessment. This may distinguish the department in this study from other similar academic departments where faculty have less experience with or are more hostile toward assessment or evaluation.

Program Profile

As early as 1969, the AL Department began offering options for undergraduate students wishing to focus on AL. Students could take courses on language learning and teaching from the AL Department and then through the university's Interdisciplinary Studies Program piece together an interdisciplinary studies major with a focus on applied linguistics. Over time,

[8] The professor teaching this course left the university in 2012. Although the course remained in the course catalog, I did not see it offered again during the rest of the case study period.

undergraduate interest in AL slowly grew until the AL Department was offering ten different undergraduate courses and there was an average annual count of 30-35 interdisciplinary studies majors who were focusing on applied linguistics. Eventually, it was determined that there was enough interest that the AL Department should establish its own undergraduate major (personal communication, December 5, 2015). The major was provisionally approved by the university in January 2011 and initiated in the Fall Semester, 2011. After five years of provisional status, the BA program applied for and was granted established status in 2016.

The BA in AL major consists of courses on second language learning, teaching, multilingualism, pidgin and creole, testing, and language analysis. Students take a total of 11 courses, eight required and three electives. Most of the courses that make up the curriculum existed before the initiation of the BA major and were developed over the decades as faculty members identified areas of need or interest. Thus, rather than being carefully designed from the beginning, the program's curriculum is one that has slowly evolved and grown without pre-planned goals or outcomes. In fact, although the courses have been offered for many years, the mission statement and outcomes for the program were developed as recently as 2010 when the major was formally proposed. A few courses have been added since the establishment of the major: A capstone course for graduating seniors, a practicum course to increase opportunities for experiential learning, and two lower division courses designed to introduce freshmen and sophomores to the field of applied linguistics. All courses that count toward the major are upper division (300-level or above) making it easy for students transferring from other colleges and universities to take up the major in their junior year. At the same time, this has created a challenge for sequencing and enforcing pre-requisites as students want to take a large number of

AL courses beginning the first semester of their junior year. Table 4.1 below shows a complete list of undergraduate AL courses.

Table 4.1. *BA in AL Program List of Courses*

Type	Number and name
Lower Division Courses	AL 150 Learning Languages and Communicating in a Globalized World AL 280 Bilingualism: Cognition and Culture
Required Courses for Major	AL 302 Second Language Learning AL 303 Second Language Teaching AL 408 Bilingual Education AL 441 Language Concepts for Applied Linguistics AL 490 Second Language Testing AL 430 Pidgin and Creole English AL 480-alpha Variable Topics in Applied Linguistics AL 485 Professionalism in AL [capstone requirement course]
Elective Courses for Major	AL 312 Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Reading & Writing AL 313 Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Listening & Speaking AL 418 Instructional Media AL 460 English Phonology AL 499 Directed Reading/Research 300-499 courses from other departments (as approved)

The BA program is designed to accommodate a variety of interests in AL so that students can go on to pursue careers in different areas such as research, social services, policy, and/or teaching. Faculty members emphasize that the program is now AL not TESOL[9] and want students to be exposed to the different perspectives from which AL is approached and have various career options. At the same time, approximately 90-95% of students are interested in language teaching (personal communication, December 5, 2015). A number of students are interested in teaching abroad after graduation, while other students are interested in teaching locally, finding work in the local tourism and service industries, or going to graduate school. A

[9] TESL tends to focus specifically on teaching English, whereas Applied Linguistics is broader and includes different careers (e.g. research, social services, policy, and teaching) and different languages.

majority of those going on to graduate school study teaching, but some have studied other fields such as psychology and law. The BA program does not offer teacher accreditation for students to teach in public schools, although faculty are working on better coordination with the College of Education (COE) and students have post-baccalaureate options for accreditation. For some faculty members, there is a sense of frustration as they aim to provide students with a firm foundation in all aspects of applied linguistics and open students' eyes to a variety of long-term career options, yet many students are more focused on receiving training for the immediate goal of teaching abroad or locally after graduation.

The BA program is managed by an undergraduate program coordinator (often referred to as the program coordinator or simply the coordinator) who also serves as the primary advisor for undergraduate students. He is assisted by the ELI associate director who also serves as an undergraduate advisor for a small portion of students. These two are considered the two program administrators and they are supported by a BA Committee which, in addition to the administrators, consists of two graduate faculty members (including the department chair) and two PhD students who have taught AL courses as graduate assistants (GAs). In 2013, I was hired as a part-time assessment specialist to help the committee develop a proposal to move the program from provisional to established status and conduct the outcomes assessment required as part of the proposal.

The program offers approximately 16 classes each semester. About two-thirds of the classes are taught by PhD students working as GAs and one third by faculty members. In 2014, a new department policy was established requiring that all graduate faculty members teach at least one undergraduate class every three semesters. This was intended to spread out the undergraduate teaching responsibilities more evenly among faculty members as the BA program

grew and the Master's program decreased in size. A faculty member has also been assigned as a Faculty Resource Person (FRP) for each course. The FRP is responsible for overseeing and updating course content and materials. However, the extent to which an FRP is actively involved in a course varies greatly. On more than one occasion I have talked to a faculty member who was not aware, or had forgotten, that he or she was the designated FRP for an undergraduate course, and some graduate faculty members were not aware that the BA program had FRPs at all. Instructional guidance for GAs varies depending on FRP involvement. In some cases, courses are taught by GAs who pass syllabi and materials down to each other from one semester to the next without ever discussing the course with a faculty member. In other cases, the faculty members meet and work with the graduate assistants on course preparation before the start of the semester; and in one particular case, GAs have complained that the FRP completely micromanages the course throughout the semester.

One challenge the coordinator and BA Committee have with coordinating the BA program and curriculum is instructor turnover. As GAs move through the PhD program and with some graduate faculty members only teaching one course every three semesters there is a frequent change of instructors, and course content can vary greatly from one semester to the next. Faculty members are accustomed to considerable independence when teaching graduate courses and that has carried over to the way they approach undergraduate courses[10]. For example, graduate faculty members rarely consult with each other on course content even when they teach the same course. For the coordinator and BA Committee this has made it difficult to develop a coherent curriculum. Efforts to create a set of student learning outcomes for each

[10] As in many universities, faculty members in this department hold fast to the tradition of academic freedom, which makes them reluctant to interfere in any way with how or what their colleagues teach and resistant to external forces they perceive as interfering with what they teach.

course as a means of creating more consistency in the program have met with limited success. Outcomes statements exist for most courses; however, instructors tend to ignore them. They either write their own outcomes for their section of the course or don't refer to the outcomes at all, sometimes removing them from the syllabus.

Another challenge facing faculty and staff involved in the BA program is the unexpected popularity and rapid growth of the major. In proposing the new major, the department estimated that the number of majors would grow to 45 over five years. Within two years there were over 80 declared AL majors. This has placed a strain on resources in the department. When creating the program, the department was informed by the university that no new resources would be available and the new program must be developed through the reallocation of existing department resources (an effect of the university's budget crisis and historical budget model). Initially, the department was able to meet this requirement by shifting resources from the MA and the ELI programs, as these had shrunk. For example, the coordinator and many of the GA positions were re-allocated from the ELI to the BA program. It was also expected that graduate faculty would be available to shift time from the MA program to teach and consult on undergraduate classes. However, when the number of majors jumped to 80 in just two years, there were not enough resources. In particular, the two program administrators were especially strained as they struggled to provide advising to over 80 students, manage the large number of GAs now needed to teach classes in the program, teach their own classes, deal with the usual administrative responsibilities of starting and developing a new academic program at the university, and maintain their roles as administrators of the ELI.

The BA Committee

The BA Committee meets intermittently to discuss and work on various matters regarding the management and development of the BA program. The frequency of meetings depends a great deal on the workload of the coordinator, graduate faculty members' schedules, and what issues may be pressing that semester. Finding a common meeting time when all committee members are available has been an ongoing challenge. Some years the committee has met once a month, others less than once a semester.

During my time working with the BA program, there were several matters that formed the main topics of BA Committee discussions. These matters were usually discussed in BA Committee meetings and then dealt with further by individual committee members who would later report back to the BA Committee. During semesters when the committee did not meet, the coordinator would meet with individual members of the committee to follow up on the issues. These matters are described in more detail below.

- Competitive admissions requirement. The Committee researched whether or not to establish an admissions requirement for the major given the unexpectedly large size of the program. This included investigating university rules for establishing an admissions requirement, liaising with university administrators to take into consideration the political implications of such a policy, considering practical implications for those responsible for implementing the policy, and discussing criteria for admission and potential consequences on students and the program as a whole[11].
- Experiential learning. The committee investigated possibilities for an organized experiential learning program (such as a practicum, service learning, student teaching,

[11] At the time of writing, no decision had been made and the program continued the default open admission policy allowing any student admitted to the university to declare AL as a major.

etc.) and then developed and implemented a practicum course based on the findings. In addition, advisors and faculty members have collaborated with schools in the community to establish opportunities for extra-curricular experiential learning opportunities, such as tutoring, volunteering, etc.

- Collaboration with the College of Education (COE). Committee members collaborated with faculty in the COE to establish an elementary education AL endorsement for COE students. They have also been involved in the development of special sections of AL courses for COE students.
- Graduate placement and recruitment. The coordinator, assisted by committee members, works with potential employers, recruiting organizations, and graduate schools to ensure the BA in AL degree is understood and respected, particularly since the degree does not include a teaching credential. They also screen potential recruiters to ensure they are reputable. Additionally, committee members recently negotiated an agreement with an MA program at another university so that BA in AL graduates admitted to that program would automatically be granted "advanced entry status" which includes a scholarship and a waiver of 7-10 graduate credits.
- Articulation with a local community college: Committee members have been in discussion with the coordinator of the associates degree in second language teaching (SLT) program at a local community college to improve articulation between the two programs. The community college will begin teaching the two lower division AL courses in 2017.

- Course evaluations: Committee members worked with university administrators and IT experts to adapt the university's online course evaluation platform to suit BA in AL program course evaluation questions.
- AL 302-Second Language Learning Course. Committee members, including the FRP for 302, revised the content of AL 302 (the pre- or co-requisite for all other courses in the program) to update and broaden content and incorporate new perspectives on language learning.
- GA performance evaluations. In response to a new requirement by the College, the BA Committee created a policy and process for evaluating GAs teaching in the BA program.
- Outcomes assessment. Since 2013, the BA Committee has also been involved in conducting outcomes assessment of its PLOs. A more detailed description of the outcomes assessment process is given in the next section; however, it is important to note that a substantial amount of committee meeting time has been dedicated to this process. Other matters, such as articulation with the community college, were often postponed to allow sufficient time for outcomes assessment. Usually, about 50% of meeting time was dedicated to the assessment process, and some special meetings were dedicated wholly to assessment processes such as rubric development and rater training/standardization sessions. Assessment of PLOs was a required part of the proposal for established status; however, the coordinator also took the view that assessment should be done well and be as useful and meaningful as possible. Because of this, more committee time was dedicated to this than if it were being done only for compliance reasons. The coordinator felt this was time well spent, but observed, "If

> you're doing it to jump through hoops, it's just time consuming. If you're doing it in a way that's valuable, it is incredibly time consuming" (personal communication October 23, 2015).

Evaluation Context

As noted previously, academic programs in higher education currently face multiple assessment and evaluation pressures. Academic programs may be asked to engage in or provide information for assessment at multiple levels (state, institutional, program, and individual) as well as engage in or provide information for evaluations pertaining to program features other than teaching and learning. To understand the impact of program-level assessment activities, it is important to first understand the broader evaluation context in which they are being conducted.

In the following section, I describe the evaluation context of the BA in AL program. First, I describe the program's evaluation activities and their relationships to each other. Several of activities overlap as information from one evaluation activity may be used as part of another activity or report; this creates a complex web of evaluation activity. For example, the self-study conducted for the program's established status proposal included data from a college exit survey, an alumni survey, and outcomes assessment. However, the self-study also required information not included in any other evaluation activity and the other evaluation activities had their own (and sometimes multiple) uses independent of the self-study. The last evaluation activity described in this chapter is outcomes assessment. I have put this last because the outcomes assessment process was lengthy and complex and has resulted in additional curriculum and professional development activities. Thus, this section is considerably longer than the others; however, the detailed description of the process and subsequent activities is warranted as they factor prominently in the analysis and discussion of impacts in the next chapter. Finally, I discuss

which of the many evaluation activities served program-level assessment purposes and were used to improve teaching and learning in the BA in AL program. It is these program-level assessment activities which are analyzed for their impact in the next chapter.

In its first five years, the BA in AL was engaged in the following evaluation activities:

- Self-study for the established status proposal (program review)
- Cost and revenue template and program efficiency data
- Alumni survey and e-mail communications
- College exit survey
- Annual assessment reports to the university assessment office
- Student-led utilization-focused evaluation projects
- Individual review of courses
- GA performance evaluations
- Course evaluations
- Outcomes assessment

Although not all of them were specifically program-level assessment activities, all of the activities affected the program in terms of requiring time and effort from the BA committee or influencing decision making in the BA program. Each of these activities is addressed below.

Self-Study for the Established Status Proposal

As is routine for new academic programs, the BA in AL program was originally granted provisional status when it was initiated and was then required to apply for established status at the end of five years. The Office of Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs' (OVCAA) webpage stated that established status proposals should include (a) "Evidence of ongoing program assessment and the use of assessment data to improve the program;" and (b) "Evidence of a

healthy student population in terms of enrollment, time-to-degree, and employment of graduates." As part of the proposal, programs were also expected to conduct a self-study based on the following seven guidelines (most of which are written in question form):

1. Is the program organized to meet its objectives?
2. Is the program meeting its learning objectives for students?
3. Are program resources adequate?
4. Is the program efficient?
5. Evidence of program quality
6. Are program outcomes compatible with the objectives?
7. Are program objectives still appropriate functions of the college and university?[12]

These questions were the same as the questions used in the guidelines for program reviews of already established programs at the university, therefore, the proposal for established status was in effect a program review.

The self-study for the established status proposal was a driver of many assessment activities for the program and the main reason I was hired as an assessment specialist. In 2013, concerned that little had been done to prepare the proposal, the department allocated resources for a part-time assessment specialist who could lead the process of gathering and compiling data, write the proposal, and lead the BA program through the necessary assessment processes. I was hired in January 2014.

Early in 2014, the coordinator and I met with program officers from the OVCAA to discuss the self-study and clarify questions regarding expectations. At that meeting, it was emphasized that the program needed to show that it was engaging in and using outcomes

[12] See Appendix D for a copy of the self-study guidelines with details regarding the types of evidence suggested for each question.

assessment, tracking and attending to the placement of graduates, and engaging in activities that supported university's strategic plan. The representatives also emphasized quantitative data such as student semester hours and number of majors. During the meeting, they looked up the BA in AL program's numbers through the online information management system and indicated that such quantitative data was an important part of the proposal but probably would not be a concern for the BA in AL program given its already high enrollment numbers.

The different questions in the self-study necessitated different approaches to compiling information. Some questions simply required updating existing program information. For example, information for question one was similar to the information required for the initial program proposal and only required updates on the course offerings, curriculum map, etc. Other questions required gathering new information about existing program activities. For example, question seven asked about alignment of the program with the university's mission and strategic plan[13]. This required identifying what activities the program was engaged in that matched the strategic plan (e.g. articulation with the community college, interdisciplinary collaboration) and interviewing faculty members to get more details. In this case, the self-study did not change the actions of faculty members in the program, but it did, to a small degree, serve as positive reinforcement for participation in such activities.

However, several questions required that the program change its approaches to gathering and using data and in some cases engage in new activities all together. For example, question five required that the program create a system for tracking and reporting alumni placement, and question four required that the program complete a cost and revenue template and in doing so

[13] The original proposal to initiate the program also required this information. However, it referred to the 2002-2010 strategic plan. The new (2011-2015) strategic plan was substantially different from the previous one, and therefore new information had to be gathered.

develop a system for gathering and tracking efficiency data each semester. While the BA program had previously used various methods for considering issues like alumni placement or program efficiency (e.g., the coordinator kept in touch with alumni and kept an eye on class size each semester), formal, systematic processes for regular data gathering and use had not been in place. Question two had perhaps the greatest effect on the program in that it required that the program engage in and use outcomes assessment for program improvement. Because these three activities required substantial time and effort, and because they often stand on their own as independent assessment activities, I have described them separately below as independent assessment activities.

With regard to the self-study and established status proposal as a whole, the purpose appeared to be two-fold: (1) It provided information to the OVCAA and Board of Regents to determine whether or not the program should be continued; and (2) it encouraged programs to prioritize certain factors such as program efficiency and alumni placement, and use specific methods for assessment and curriculum planning, such as direct outcomes assessment and curriculum mapping. Some AL faculty members expressed a slightly more cynical view noting that it mainly enabled the university to fulfill its bureaucratic and accountability obligations. One faculty member described its purpose simply as, “To give the bureaucracy an excuse to legitimate and move the status of this degree from provisional to established” (personal communication, November 13, 2015). The OVCAA’s immediate feedback on the established status proposal focused on program efficiency and the cost and revenue template. For example, when the proposal was submitted to the OVCAA, initial comments were that our numbers looked good, and initial questions were clarification questions regarding costs (personal

communication, April 28, 2016). Thus, from my perspective it seemed that the priority for judging the program, among the many components of the self-study, was efficiency.

Cost and Revenue Template and Program Efficiency

Question four of the self-study required that programs complete a cost and revenue template as well as provide some additional information on program efficiency such as average class size. The template compared data on program revenue, based on student semester hours, tuition, and number of majors, with costs, based principally on faculty, staff, and GA salaries. Ten years of data were included: actual data on the first five years of the program and predictions for the next five years of the program. I gathered this data from a number of sources: The Institutional Research Office (IRO) reports, the college's personnel department, and university webpages. I then adjusted for factors such as inflation, tuition increases, and salary freezes, and entered the information in the template. Formulas in the template automatically calculated costs per semester hour and total revenues for each year. A narrative accompanied the template in which I explained where each piece of data came from. In addition, some discrepancies had to be accounted for, or at least described, such as a considerable difference in the number of majors reported in the IRO reports versus the university's online student registration and tracking system and the program coordinator's own counts. The process resulted in the creation of several spreadsheets that tracked data by the semester. I sent updated files to the coordinator each semester so that he had records and could use the data to assist with scheduling of courses and instructors or other matters. However, the coordinator already had his own methods for such decisions, and the information was not particularly useful to the program other than that it fulfilled the requirements of the established status proposal. The numbers demonstrated that the

undergraduate program was very successful with regard to efficiency, costs, and revenue, and therefore did not necessitate any changes to the program.

It is important to note that in an era when universities have information management systems with regularly updated data on headcount enrollments, class sizes, graduation rates, and other performance indicators, programs are aware that university administrators may be evaluating them based on this data at any time. This steady flow of quantitative data means that evaluation is taking place without formal evaluation activities or reports being filed. Faculty members and administrators in the BA in AL program were aware that program size and efficiency were being monitored using online information management systems. In meetings with the dean, associate dean, the OVCAA, and other administrators, there were discussions of class sizes, numbers of instructors, and headcount enrollments, and it was clear that college and university administrators checked these numbers on their own without waiting for formal reports. The discussions with college and university administrators concerning efficiency data then influenced decision making within the BA program. For example, some university administrators raised concerns about class sizes in the college, and these concerns were passed down to department chairs. In response to those concerns, AL 150-Learning Languages and Communicating in a Globalized World, which was being conceptualized at the time, was then designed to be an introductory course which could have relatively large class sizes (personal communication, October 23, 2015). Thus, while the cost and revenue template was an important and time consuming assessment activity and self-study component, it was less influential in the BA program than the fact that that program efficiency data was constantly available to university administrators and was often discussed at administrative meetings.

Alumni Survey and E-Mail Communications

The alumni survey was initiated in fall 2014. The idea for an alumni survey emerged from the meeting with the OVCAA in which the BA program was strongly encouraged to include information regarding the placement of BA program graduates to address question five in the self-study. Consequently, I designed a very brief online survey asking alumni about current employment or graduate school placement and the most useful courses and skills learned in the BA program. The coordinator then sent an email invitation to participate in the survey and the survey link to program alumni. Unfortunately, the response rate, even after repeated reminders, was very low. We considered administering a revised survey in fall 2015, but did not follow through as both the coordinator and I had other assessment and administrative matters pressing at that time and the usefulness of the survey seemed limited. Additionally, the coordinator had established another method for gathering information from alumni. As the instructor of the capstone course and the principal undergraduate advisor in the program, he was frequently contacted by alumni seeking recommendation letters or advice after graduation and therefore maintained email correspondence with a good number of graduates. Whenever he received new information from graduates regarding their post-graduation placements or accomplishments, he would update a database he maintained with student and alumni information. While this data-gathering technique was less systematic than a survey, through this correspondence, the coordinator was able to get information from a much larger number of students than had been obtained from the survey. We combined information from the first survey with the information the coordinator had collected through correspondence and reported the combined data in the self-study for the established status proposal.

Reporting alumni placement appears to have helped the program's established status proposal as it was reported to me that a member of Board of Regents responded positively to the fact that the program was tracking this data (personal communication, December 15, 2016). However, other than fulfilling requirements for the established status proposal, the program had little formal use for the aggregated alumni placement data it collected. At BA Committee meetings, the coordinator would update committee members on news of recent alumni placements or accomplishments, and committee members would listen with interest. It is possible that knowledge about alumni placement indirectly informed BA Committee discussions and decisions, but I did not observe any situations where the aggregated alumni placement data from the database was used as a basis for decision making.

College Exit Survey

The college exit survey was administered to graduating students of all undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the college. Designed and administered by the associate dean's office, the survey collected some student demographic information, but primarily asked students to rate various program features using Likert scale items and to respond to several open-ended questions on the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Likert scale items asked students to rate the quality of teaching, course offerings, advising, facilities, the capstone course, and preparation for employment. At the request of the AL program, a section on PLOs was added to the BA in AL program's questionnaire in which students were asked to rate how well they could perform each of the PLOs for the major.

The exit survey was conducted primarily by and for the college, but the chair from each department received a PDF file of results after each academic year. The PDF file contained a list of frequency tables for the Likert scale items and lists of comments for each open-ended item.

For the BA Program, the department chair forwarded the results on to the program coordinator, who forwarded a copy to me to use as the assessment specialist.

For the BA program, the survey was first administered in fall 2012, the second year of the program. Students received email invitations to participate in the survey and completed it on their own time. Response rates in the first two years were quite low, approximately 30%. Starting in fall 2013, students were told that participation was mandatory and response rates rose to 83%.

How the associate dean's office used the exit survey results was not clear to the BA program faculty and staff that I spoke to. The department chair could not recall receiving any feedback regarding the survey results, and the coordinator noted only one occasion where he received feedback on the survey. In 2013, a question asking students to rate advising in the program was added to the questionnaire. The BA program received extremely high results for this item, and the coordinator, who also served as the principal undergraduate advisor, received a letter congratulating him on the high rating for advising. Beyond this, there was very little feedback from the college regarding the survey. How individual programs or departments were expected to use the survey results, if at all, was also not clear to BA program faculty and staff. The department chair and the program coordinator both stated that they scanned the PDF file to see if any data stood out to them as needing attention; however, they did not have time to engage in detailed analysis.

When I started as the assessment specialist, I conducted detailed analysis of the survey results for the first two years and developed a report which was distributed to BA Committee members. To conduct a statistical analysis of the Likert items and a more detailed, systematic analysis of the qualitative data, I requested copies of the results be sent in Excel format. Unfortunately, the data I received and the spreadsheet formatting differed from year to year.

Therefore, organizing data to look for developments from year to year or simply to conduct analysis of qualitative items was a challenge. Moreover, a lack of committee meeting time meant that the report could only briefly be presented and there was little time for discussion. The following year, because of time constraints, I conducted only statistical analysis of quantitative data and used the results for the self-study.

However, this is not to say that the exit survey went unused. Despite the ambiguity regarding intended use, and the lack of time and resources to conduct detailed analysis and reporting, the college exit survey results proved useful to the program in several ways. For the department chair and the coordinator, the survey results seemed most useful for supporting program planning decisions already made based on other data. For example, the BA program administrators and instructors sensed a need for more experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students soon after the establishment of the major. At the suggestion of the coordinator, this need was further investigated and confirmed through a utilization-focused evaluation project conducted by a graduate student (described in the next section), and the BA Committee decided to create a student practicum course. When student comments on the survey strongly indicated the need for more experiential learning opportunities like a practicum, these results were used to further support the argument and proposal for the practicum course.

The department chair used survey results in a similar way to support changes to policies regarding undergraduate teaching responsibilities for graduate faculty. Challenges with course scheduling indicated a need for more graduate faculty to teach undergraduate courses. The chair proposed a new department policy whereby graduate faculty would teach at least one undergraduate course every three semesters. Upon receiving the exit survey results and noticing comments by students indicating a desire to be taught by more professors rather than just GAs,

the chair used these comments in his arguments to further support the suggested policy change (personal communication, November 13, 2015).

As the assessment specialist, I used the exit survey primarily to provide evidence of program quality[14] in the established status proposal. Students tended to rate features of the BA in AL program highly and provide very positive feedback regarding the program and their achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, the survey results were useful as evidence of program quality and that the program is meeting its learning objectives for students.

One final way the survey results influenced the BA program was through advising. Even after the creation of the practicum course, a quick scan of the survey results showed that graduating students continued to show a desire for more practical and experiential learning during their studies. This motivated the advisor to place more emphasis on this topic during advising sessions and ask students more often about participating in both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for experiential learning. For example, he would encourage students to participate in volunteer opportunities, paid tutoring, or the practicum course, and check in with students on these experiences at each advising session (personal communication, April 7, 2016).

Student-Led Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) Projects

The student-led UFE projects took place in the first year of the BA program before I began working with the program. However, these projects were mentioned in interviews I had with faculty members and assessment discussions I had with the coordinator, so I include them here because they are an important part of the program's evaluation history.

[14] Specifically, it was used to respond to questions two and five of the self-study guidelines for the established status proposal.

As described in the previous section, the AL Department has a strong background in assessment and evaluation, and graduate students sometimes conducted research and evaluation projects involving AL Department programs. In AY 2011-12 two UFE projects were conducted by MA students for the BA program. One was a needs analysis regarding the need for an experiential learning component in the BA curriculum. Using Patton's (2008) UFE approach to evaluation, the evaluator investigated (a) Was there a need for an organized experiential learning program (e.g. practicum, internship, or service learning)? (b) If so, what were the feasible options for developing, implementing, and sustaining such a program? The evaluator used surveys, focus groups, and the Delphi technique as evaluation methods. The results led to the creation of a new three-credit practicum course, AL 480P –Professional Practicum, and influenced the job description of a new specialist position that was being developed: the specialist was given responsibility for developing the practicum. Thus, this evaluation activity was one of the few that the BA program has engaged in that has had direct results in terms of influencing the curriculum and resource allocation.

The second UFE project was less successful. The evaluator aimed to clarify key terms in one of the BA program's learning outcomes: "Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will manifest the skills, understandings and dispositions necessary to be exceptional language professionals." The evaluator interviewed 11 faculty and staff members to clarify their expectations with regard to skills, understandings, and dispositions of a language professional. However, the result was a list of over 150 answers, and in the end, the evaluation did little to help clarify terms and understandings of the outcome. In 2014, the BA Committee began the outcomes assessment process, and through this process it was eventually determined that the above program learning outcome statement was not really an outcome statement, but rather was

a part of a general statement introducing the outcomes. It was therefore moved from the list of outcomes statements and to the introductory statement. (See Appendix E for the original and revised lists of program learning outcomes.)

The UFE projects were not continued after 2012 for two reasons: (1) The professor teaching the course on language program evaluation left and the course was not offered again, so there were no students asking to do such projects. (2) In 2014, in preparation for the provisional review, the BA Committee began engaging in outcomes assessment which demanded a considerable amount of committee members' time. The UFE projects had also been time consuming. Although the evaluations were conducted by graduate student evaluators, the BA Committee members, as the primary intended users of the evaluations, had been involved in most steps of the evaluations. There was not time to pursue both forms of evaluation.

Annual Assessment Report to the University Assessment Office

Every degree and co-curricular program at APU was required to submit an annual assessment report to the university assessment office. This report asked for information regarding program outcomes, course learning outcomes (since 2008), what kind of assessment the program engaged in, how assessment findings were used, and plans for future assessment activities. In 2015, a section of the report also asked programs to align their PLOs with institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) and the assessment office offered workshops to provide further instruction on that part of the report process.

The report was submitted in October of each year and the assessment office would send feedback to each program approximately one month later. Prior to 2013, this report for the BA program was completed by the coordinator. Beginning in 2013, and for the time period that I was

employed as the assessment specialist for the program, I took over the primary responsibility for writing the report, although the coordinator would review and submit the report[15].

For AL faculty and staff the purpose of the assessment reports was not completely clear. The coordinator and department chair believed that the annual reports were intended to encourage or "nudge" programs to engage in assessment practice. They also assumed that the assessment office used cumulative information from the reports to provide information for accreditation purposes. The assessment office webpage stated that in addition to the above purposes, the reports were used to gather data on what type of assessment support and workshops the assessment office should offer and that they were also submitted to the OVCAA for program reviews. Reports from all programs were published and archived on the assessment office webpage for ten years and were publicly accessible.

In general, the annual reports did not typically function as a program-level assessment activity, but rather they served as a means for the program to provide assessment information to the institution for institutional purposes. However, there was one case where the report was used for program improvement. During the workshop in which we aligned PLOs with ILOs, the coordinator and I concluded that PLO 9, "Students will be able to improve the quality of teaching and learning second, foreign, and heritage languages, in the state, domestically, and abroad," appeared to be a long-term goal rather than an assessable learning outcome, and therefore suggested at the next BA Committee meeting that it be removed from the outcomes and placed as a more general goal in the program description. Hence, the annual assessment reports seemed to serve the dual purposes of improvement and accountability.

[15] The annual assessment reports were discontinued by the University Assessment Office in fall 2016.

I found writing the reports to be time consuming even though they were quite short and formulaic. This was mainly because I felt I had to be cautious with what details I included in the reports given their multiple potential uses and readers. Specific information on program improvements resulting from assessment can show the institution that the program is committed to program improvement and assessment use. However, it can also draw attention to problems which individuals could then use to criticize a program. There was no evidence that any information we reported was being used against the program, but the fact that all reports were published on a webpage and could also be used for program review was cause for caution.

Course Evaluations

Every semester students at APU were asked to complete a course evaluation for each course they took. The BA in AL course evaluations had six questions:

1. Did the course follow the syllabus and meet the objectives listed in the syllabus?
2. What were the overall strengths and weaknesses of the course?
3. What would you suggest to improve the course?
4. Did the instructor promote independent thoughts and raise challenging questions?
5. Did the instructor present relevant subject matter and clarify concepts?
6. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of the instructor?

Until 2016, the evaluation was administered on carbon copy paper. Instructors handed out the evaluations on the last day of class and left the room so that students could complete the evaluations anonymously. The evaluation forms were delivered by a student to the AL office. Carbon copies were given to the instructors after grades were finalized, and originals were kept in the AL office. The AL Department approached course evaluations from the perspective that the main purpose was to provide instructors with constructive feedback on their courses.

However, there were other uses as well. If evaluations were positive, GAs kept copies to use as evidence of teaching ability in future job applications. The evaluations were also considered in a faculty member's applications for tenure or promotion. Additionally, the department copies could presumably be referred to if any serious questions about an instructor's teaching ability arose, although, I was not aware of any cases in the AL Department where this had happened. The department chair mentioned that it would be nice to be able to quickly scan and review course evaluations for every BA course every semester as a means of staying attuned to student perspectives, but that the chair and coordinator simply lacked the time.

Starting in 2016, instructors had the option of using an online evaluation. Setting up the online option had been a decision of the BA Committee, and had taken considerable time and effort as the department wanted freedom to adapt the university's standard online format to match the department's questions and format. There were some concerns about response rates for online evaluations; however, it appeared that instructors who had tried the online form preferred it and the whole BA program has been moving in that direction.

The course evaluations were a form of assessment and evaluation that was aimed more at the individual instructor level rather than the program level. As was the case with so many evaluation activities in the BA program, they seemed to serve a dual purpose: course improvement and nominal oversight of instructors. Instructors indicated that they found evaluations only moderately useful as far as constructive feedback was concerned because student feedback was often quite general and tended to be more sentimental than constructive. One instructor reported that she preferred to conduct an end-of-course discussion on the last day and solicit feedback from students through a guided discussion. She felt she received more useful information from that session than from the written course evaluation forms. She also noted that

students seemed better able to answer the questions on the forms after the discussion (personal communication, May 25, 2016). The extent to which the information was used for individual course review or influenced teaching and learning in the program is unclear and probably depended a great deal on the individual instructor. Other than to discuss the shift from paper to online format, the course evaluations were never mentioned in BA Committee discussions about the program and did not seem to influence decision making.

Individual Course Review

One faculty member felt it was important to point out that in addition to the more formal, systematic evaluation activities, faculty also engaged in individual course review. He explained, "If there's professors teaching undergraduate courses regularly, by implication, there is an informal cycle of reflection and development of those courses" (personal communication, November 13, 2015). An example, would be the revision of AL 302-Second Language Learning in which after some years, the FRP felt that the material was outdated and lacked some important perspectives on language learning. During the summer of 2015, he met with two AL 302 GAs to "revamp" the course and find new readings and materials.

Undoubtedly, many faculty and GAs who taught courses regularly in the program engaged in reflection and revised their courses, sometimes making majors revisions like the instructors for 302 and sometimes just minor tweaks from year to year. However, I hesitate to include individual course review as an evaluation activity. Individual course review as described above does not typically involve systematic processes for gathering and analyzing information – a generally agreed upon feature of evaluation. Therefore, I include it here as part of the context, but I do not include it below in the final list and figure representing evaluation activities in the program. Yet, it is important to recognize that individual course review is an important

pedagogical practice, and indeed examples of individual course review can be seen in the next chapter where assessment impacts are discussed.

GA Performance Evaluations

In 2016, the BA in AL program began implementing a performance evaluation for new GAs. This was a result of an external requirement, communicated to the department chair from the associate dean's office, that all programs establish a policy for the oversight of teaching GAs and that the policy include at least one observation. Members of the BA Committee did not know the impetus for this requirement, but believed that the requirement had come from higher-level administrators in the university and was being imposed for accreditation purposes (personal communication, November 13, 2015). The AL department chair together with the two GAs from the BA Committee met and developed an oversight policy and process that was intended to be as non-threatening as possible to GAs and require as little effort as possible by faculty (personal communication, April 7, 2016). The oversight policy was that GAs teaching a course in the BA program for the first time would be observed once by the course FRP: The FRP would meet briefly with the GA before the class to discuss the upcoming observation, conduct the observation and then provide oral feedback after the class. Assuming the FRP did not observe any extraordinary problems in the class, there would be no need for any further observation or action. The FRP would send an email to the department chair confirming the observation had taken place. The process, referred to as the GA performance evaluation, was first implemented in spring 2016, and one GA, the only new GA that semester, was observed without issue. Interestingly, GAs participating in the focus group discussion expressed disappointment with the policy as they had hoped for more faculty guidance and wanted more opportunities to be

observed. They were therefore disappointed when they heard about the minimal, compliance-oriented way that the policy had been implemented (personal communication, May 25, 2016).

Outcomes Assessment

The established status proposal asked for evidence that students were meeting program learning objectives, and OVCAA Program officers explained that this meant the program should show it is engaging in and using outcomes assessment. Thus, at the beginning of 2014, the BA program embarked on outcomes assessment to meet requirements for the established status proposal. However, the concept of outcomes assessment was not completely new to BA Committee members. The assessment office had been encouraging outcomes assessment for campus programs for some time: They had offered numerous workshops on outcomes assessment throughout the year, and in summer 2013 they offered a week-long assessment leadership institute for faculty members, which the AL department chair attended. The assessment office also encouraged outcomes assessment through the annual assessment reports it required programs to complete (i.e., some questions pertained directly to learning outcomes assessment). Therefore, members of the BA Committee were familiar with the process and its potential uses. In fact, aware that the program was expected to engage in outcomes assessment, the coordinator had been collecting and archiving student portfolios each semester so that the student work could be used for outcomes assessment in the future. However, because of the fast growth of the program and the strain on resources, the committee had focused on addressing immediate problems or concerns for the BA program as they arose, and outcomes assessment had been put on the back burner.

In late 2013, realizing that outcomes assessment was a requirement for the established status proposal, the coordinator and department chair decided to make outcomes assessment a

priority and other issues were moved down on the list of priorities for the committee. For the next two and a half years, the BA Committee engaged in outcomes assessment: two assessment cycles followed by additional curriculum review workshops. Those activities are described below.

First assessment cycle. In early 2014, the BA Committee began the first step in the outcomes assessment cycle: identifying program learning outcomes for assessment. In a small meeting, the program coordinator, a representative from the assessment office, and I selected two outcomes for assessment, PLOs 1 and 3, on the basis that there was student work available to serve as evidence for the outcomes and the outcomes were related and could be assessed with the same evidence. The two PLO statements are shown in Figure 4.1.

Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will:

1. manifest the skills, understandings, and dispositions necessary to be exceptional language professionals.
3. demonstrate an understanding of the value bases of their professional work.

Figure 4.1. PLO Statements assessed in the first assessment cycle

The outcomes pertained to students' professional skills and the ability to discuss the value basis of their professional work. Therefore, a professional philosophy statement and cover letter which students prepared for the capstone course were selected as evidence of these outcomes. The BA Committee then met and developed a draft analytic rubric which was later finalized through further drafts and consultations sent out via email. (See Appendix F for the rubric.) Next, a standardization session was scheduled in which the six BA Committee members discussed and practiced rating sample papers. These sample papers later served as anchors for raters during the assessment process. I then selected work from the portfolios of 30 randomly selected students and redacted identifying information. Each committee member was given work

from 10 students to rate; two committee members rated each piece of work. Using the rubric, student work was rated as: “Below expectations” (one point), “Meets expectations” (two points), or “Exceeds expectations” (three points). In cases where raters disagreed on a student’s work by more than one point, a third rater was asked to rate the work and the work was discussed among raters. This process was finished in May 2014; however, because of the summer break, results were not presented until fall 2014.

Approximately 70% of students met or exceeded expectations for the PLOs. This was respectable, but fell short of the target the committee had set of 80%. Over the fall semester, the committee discussed options for improving teaching and learning based on the results. Suggestions included sharing information across courses, improved scaffolding of key assignments across courses, a more detailed curriculum map of assignments, and specifically revising the instructions and rubric used for the professional philosophy statement assignment in the capstone course. Through the various discussions, it also became clear that PLO 1 was unclear and it was eventually decided that the PLO served better as an introductory statement than a learning outcome to be assessed.

The following changes resulted from the first outcomes assessment cycle: (1) the two BA program administrators who also served as the instructors for the capstone course decided to revise the professional philosophy statement assignment in the capstone course to make instructions and expectations clearer to students; (2) The list of PLOs was revised and PLO 1 became part of the introductory statement rather than an outcome. At the same time, work with the assessment office on aligning PLOs with ILOs brought to light issues with PLO 9, “Upon graduating from the BA in AL program, students will improve the quality of teaching and learning second, foreign, and heritage languages, in the state, domestically, and abroad.” This

was discussed in the committee when PLO 1 was discussed, and eventually both PLOs were changed so that the list was reduced from nine to seven PLOs (See Appendix E).

Second assessment cycle. The second cycle began in spring 2015. Two new PLOs (newly numbered PLO 1 and PLO 4) were selected to be assessed together again on the basis that the same piece of evidence, an academic paper, could be used to assess both outcomes.

Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will manifest the skills, understandings, and dispositions necessary to be exceptional language professionals. Students will be able to:

1. demonstrate critical thinking and awareness of issues within the context of their professional work and social practice.
4. critically evaluate and make use of research into the learning, use, structure, and/or pedagogy of second languages.

Figure 4.2. PLO Statements assessed in the second assessment cycle

The academic papers were drawn from students' final e-portfolios in which they were required to provide a sample of academic work. Most students had selected their research papers from AL 408-Bilingual Education as their submissions for their e-portfolios, and as no instructors from this course served on the BA Committee, the committee decided to ask two instructors from AL 408 to join them for the outcomes assessment process.

The outcomes assessment process in the second cycle followed the same steps as in the first cycle. The committee members and two AL 408 GAs participated in a rubric development session followed by a standardization session. (See Appendix G for the rubric from the second cycle.) Sample papers from the standardization session then served as anchors during the assessment process. I randomly selected 30 academic papers from students' e-portfolios and redacted identifying information. One AL 408 GA had to withdraw from the rating process due to a family emergency, so there was a total of seven raters. Raters received between eight and ten papers each, and each paper was rated by two raters.

Results of the process were presented and discussed in a BA Committee meeting in May 2015 and then taken up for further discussion in meetings during the Fall Semester 2015. The results were disappointing for the committee. Only 50% of students met or exceeded expectations for PLO 1 and only 43% of students met or exceeded expectations for PLO 4. Among the suggestions made by committee members for improving teaching and learning, the most popular were scaffolding critical thinking and analysis skills across courses; providing an archive of exemplary student work for instructors and students to use as models; and informing instructors of the PLOs, and requiring that instructors include the PLOs in course syllabi. (Discussions had revealed that many instructors were not aware that the program had PLOs or a curriculum map.)

During the discussions, the coordinator raised concerns about program cohesion – that the major was seen by students and instructors as 11 separate courses rather than a coherent curriculum and program. He noted the need for greater faculty involvement if there was to be anything like scaffolding or a more cohesive curriculum. However, another committee member asserted that many faculty members would not be particularly interested in such efforts as their priorities were research, publishing, and graduate courses related to their research interests (personal communication, September 25, 2015).

First curriculum workshop. It was eventually decided to conduct a professional development workshop aimed at GAs, who were generally more involved in the undergraduate curriculum than faculty members. The workshop was planned by me, one of the GAs on the BA Committee, and the coordinator, with input from other members of the BA Committee. The goals of the workshop were: (a) Provide GAs with background information on the program's history, goals, courses, and students so that they have a better understanding of the program as a

whole; (b) Encourage GAs to share information about their courses with each other so they have a better idea of what students are getting in other courses; and (c) Introduce the GAs to PLOs and CLOs, informing them of the program's PLOs and helping them critique and improve the CLOs for their own courses. They were also given information on the outcomes assessment process the committee had been engaged in. The workshop was held at the beginning of December so that GAs would have time to revise their syllabi for the next semester if they chose to do so. The BA committee also intended to inform faculty of the workshop and welcome any faculty members who may want to attend. Unfortunately, the committee members in charge of informing the faculty forgot to do so. In the end, the workshop was attended by nine GAs, and five BA Committee members, a total of 14. All attendance was voluntary.

Participants were highly engaged during the workshop, and they actively discussed the program and the content of their courses in small group activities and then in whole group discussions. Participants raised a number of questions about the wording of the PLOs, as well as why certain skills, knowledge, or dispositions were or weren't included among the PLOs. There was also considerable discussion about the curriculum map as the participants felt some courses designated as meeting certain PLOs were not addressing them, and some courses not designated for certain PLOs did contain skills or knowledge that addressed them. Finally, questions about sequencing were raised. For example, instructors of courses AL 312 and 313[16] were not certain about what to expect with regard to student preparation from AL 303 given that 303 was a foundation course for the program but could be taken simultaneously with 312 or 313. At the end of the three-hour workshop, participants were not given any concrete follow-up tasks but were encouraged to think more about their course CLOs, and the BA program's PLOs with the

[16] AL 303 – Second Language Teaching, AL 312 – Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Reading and Writing, AL 313 – Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Listening and Speaking.

intention that these topics would be taken up further the following semester. The participants were left with the following question to reflect on for the next semester: “How can we move from helping our students achieve CLOs to helping them achieve the PLOs?” (personal communication, December 5, 2015).

The workshop proved useful for both the GAs and the BA Committee. GAs reported having gained a better sense of where their courses fit into the bigger picture of the program and benefitting from learning about each other’s courses. They also noted that they learned a lot about how to write CLOs and found an activity where they used an action verb list to critique and improve CLOs in their syllabi particularly useful (See Appendix I.) A few GAs reported making changes to their syllabi for the next semester as a result of the workshop. However, a couple of GAs felt that without faculty involvement there seemed little point in discussing PLOs and CLOs as there was uncertainty as to how faculty members would respond to any changes made by GAs. Moreover, without a faculty member involved to ensure continuity in the future, any improvements would likely be lost in the future once this round of GAs graduated (personal communication, April 4, 2016).

For the BA Committee, workshop discussions brought new insights into what was going on in classes and even provided BA Committee members with information which helped them address other program matters. For example, during small group discussions about their courses, some GAs began discussing the preparation of transfer students from a community college SLT program. In a recent BA Committee meeting, questions about these students had arisen as members discussed the issue of how to improve articulation with the community college. During the workshop, BA Committee members listened to the small group discussions about the students and gained useful information that helped inform future committee discussions on

articulation. Additionally, the workshop brought to light problems with the PLOs, course sequencing, and the curriculum map that would need to be addressed.

The next semester, rather than begin a third assessment cycle with new PLOs, the coordinator and I agreed to continue focusing on assessment use, specifically addressing issues of program cohesion and other issues raised in the GA workshop. However, the next semester brought with it new challenges:

- Because of the amount of time spent on assessment the previous semesters, there were other BA program matters the coordinator had postponed but which now needed to be addressed;
- A department secretary was on long-term leave and the program administrators had taken over her responsibilities for the BA program and the ELI;
- Faculty members on the BA Committee were serving on a large number of graduate student committees requiring their attention that semester and scheduling those meetings became a priority;
- I was no longer employed as an assessment specialist as the proposal for established status was nearly complete and required only review and final edits from the coordinator and department chair;
- And finally, given that the proposal for established status was nearly complete, there was no longer any immediate pressure to engage in assessment activities.

Thus, efforts to schedule BA Committee meetings were repeatedly postponed as other matters took priority, and in the end, there were no BA Committee meetings that semester.

Second curriculum workshop. By the end of March, concerned that there would be no follow-up to the first workshop, and that much of the outcomes assessment work would amount

to nothing, I sent the coordinator an email reviewing what had been learned and discussed at the previous workshop and proposing several options for follow-up actions. The coordinator and department chair met and from among the options chose to offer a second professional development workshop for instructors (personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Both faculty and GAs were invited to the second professional development workshop for the BA program. Four faculty members, seven GAs, and five BA Committee members attended, making a total of sixteen participants. Of the participants, approximately half had attended the first workshop. To start there was a quick discussion of the important points from the first workshop to bring first-time participants up to speed and to refresh the memories of returnees. However, the main aim of the second workshop was to work toward a curriculum map that better reflected what was happening in the courses by having participants link assignments and tasks done in their classes to PLOs. In doing so, it was hoped that participants would also reflect specifically on how they could help students work toward achieving the PLOs. Participants first completed a worksheet in which they described in what ways the activities in their classes addressed some of the PLOs and further described how they assessed these activities. They then wrote their information on large post-its and stuck them on the wall to create a large curriculum map that the whole group could walk around and look at. This was followed by small and then large group discussions about the PLOs and curriculum map.

Participants benefitted from the workshop in different ways. As had been the case in the first workshop, first time participants reported benefitting a great deal from the opportunity to exchange information about their courses with other instructors. They also reported that it was interesting and useful to learn that the program had PLOs and that it was engaged in the outcomes assessment process, and the workshop helped them develop a more holistic perspective

of the program. Some first-time GAs also found the quick review of how outcomes are stated and the action verb handout very useful, although first-time faculty members were less interested in this part of the workshop. For returning participants, the work on the curriculum map was interesting and useful (personal communication, May 25, 2016). One faculty member, a first-time participant, also reported changing the content of his course as a result of the workshop. After learning more about what was being taught in other classes the FRP for AL 303-Second Language Teaching modified the content of the course for the next semester. He chose to spend less time on some topics that he discovered were covered in the other courses and more time on some topics that were not. However, the faculty member reported that learning about the PLOs and curriculum map did not influence the modifications (personal communication August 30, 2016). (All of the above benefits are revisited in more detail in the next chapter.)

Focusing on specific tasks and assignments and how they linked to the PLOs made participants think more deeply about their interpretations of the PLOs and therefore raised further questions about the PLOs. Indeed, during the second workshop, it became clear that some issues with the PLOs were deeper than just the need for the slight rewording of statements. This stimulated questions about how the PLOs had been developed. Discussions during the workshops (and in some BA Committee meetings) revealed the following: The PLOs had been quickly developed because they were required for the proposal to initiate the new BA program. The two faculty members and program coordinator who developed the proposal had been under pressure to meet a deadline and therefore did not have much time for consultation with other faculty members. Also, there had been little forethought regarding the role the PLOs would play in program assessment after the program was approved as PLOs were seen as a bureaucratic step that just needed to get done. Of the two faculty members involved in developing the initial

proposal, one faculty member had experience in evaluation and assessment and may have had some thoughts for how to use the PLOs in program assessment and development; however, that faculty member left the university in 2012. The second faculty member had not been aware of the role that outcomes were supposed to play in program assessment and had only seen them as bureaucratic requirement. Thus, the PLOs, and some other features of the program, were developed without much consultation or buy-in from other faculty members, and problems with the PLOs reflected this (personal communications, September 25, 2015; December 5, 2015; May 18, 2016). The outcomes assessment process is based on the premise that there is agreement and buy-in from faculty with regard to the learning outcomes for the program. However, this did not seem to be the case with the BA in AL program.

At the time of writing, the BA Committee was discussing further actions and ideas to follow up on the second workshop. One new initiative that the BA Committee had decided on was the development of an orientation packet, and perhaps an orientation session, for new BA in AL GAs. This emerged from feedback from GAs who commented that it would have been helpful to know much of the information they learned at the workshops before they had started teaching in the program.[17]

Interaction of Evaluation Activities

Finally, it is important to note the interaction between outcomes assessment and other evaluation activities. No evaluation activity existed independently, and each one interacted with each other as the program had limited resources that it could commit to evaluation. The

[17] As part of researcher reciprocity and participant involvement in my research, I reported preliminary findings of my research to the BA Committee in a meeting on September 30, 2016. This served to provide the BA Committee useful information for considering future directions for assessment and curriculum activities and allowed me to member-check information. Based on the GA feedback reported on in the preliminary findings, the BA Committee decided to plan an orientation packet, and perhaps an orientation session, for new GAs.

interaction between the outcomes assessment process and other activities is a good example of this. While outcomes assessment had long been encouraged, it was the self-study for the established status proposal that provided the main impetus for the program to begin engaging in outcomes assessment. Likewise, when immediate pressure from the established status proposal lessened, the resources committed to outcomes assessment, mainly time, also lessened. Moreover, while the program was fully engaged in outcomes assessment, resources were drawn away from other program matters, including other assessment activities: That is, once the BA Committee began the outcomes assessment process, there was little time to attend to the college exit survey, alumni survey, or any UFE projects. Therefore, these activities were pushed aside, with the alumni data and college survey receiving only the minimum attention necessary to provide the necessary information for the self-study.

Summary of Evaluation and Assessment Activities

Figure 4.3 lists the various evaluation activities discussed in this chapter and the different levels at which the evaluation activities functioned for the BA in AL program.

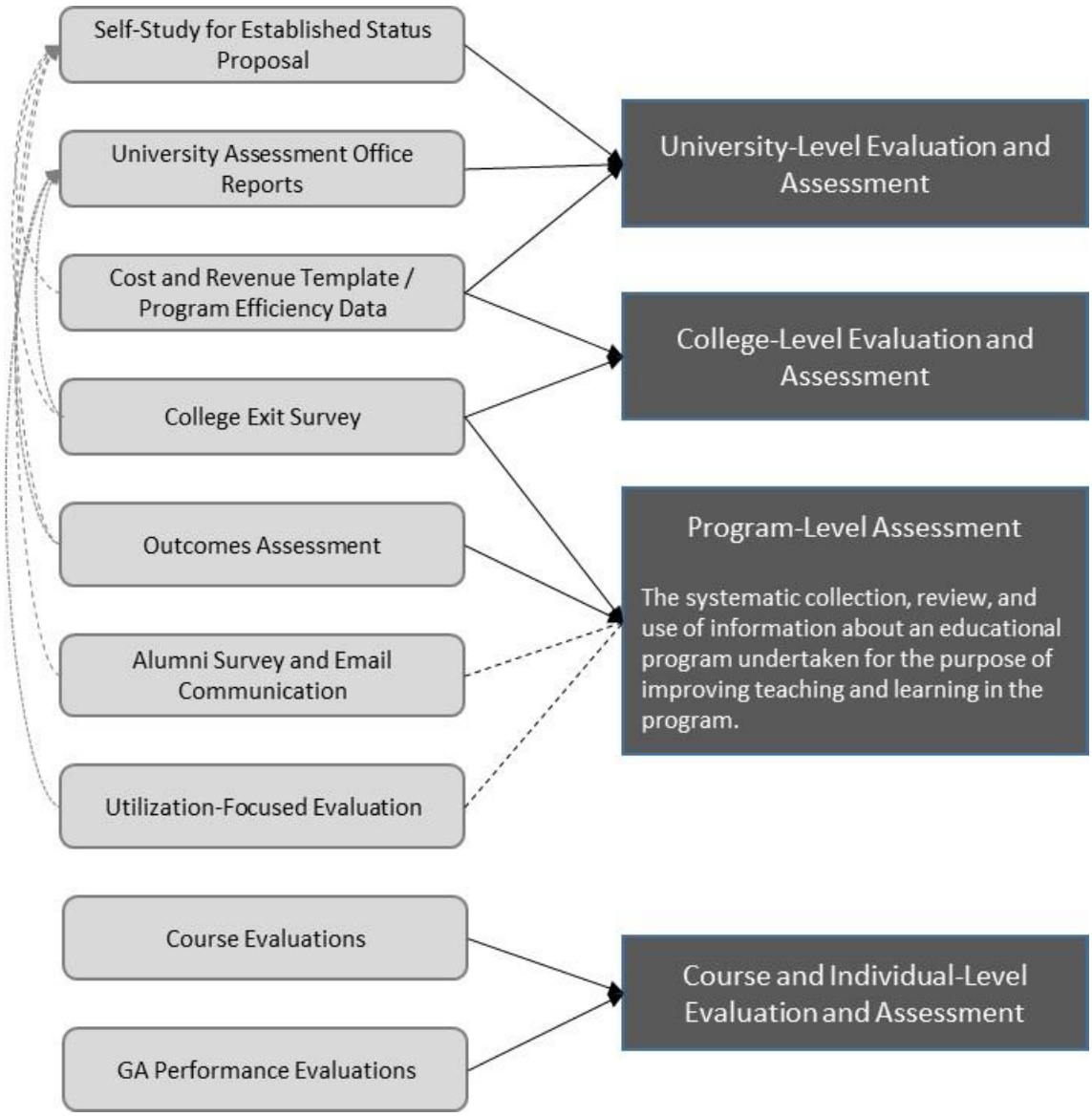

Figure 4.3. BA in AL evaluation activities organized by level

The self-study for the established status proposal, the university assessment office reports, and the cost and revenue template and efficiency data primarily served to inform decision making at the university level; the efficiency data was also used at the college level. The college exit survey also straddled two levels: It was used both at the college level and the program level. Outcomes assessment was the most dominant evaluation activity with regard to time and effort and stands out as the activity most used to assess teaching and learning at the

program level. I have included the alumni survey and email communications as program-level assessment, but used a dotted line in the diagram because although the program coordinator and I intended to use the alumni data for program assessment; in the end, the data was not very useful and the activities mostly just served to fulfill requirements for the self-study. The student-led UFE projects have also been given a dotted line because although they served the purpose of program-level assessment, they did not take place during the case study. The UFE projects had been completed before the case study began and have been included only because they are an important part of the program's evaluation history. Finally, two activities, the course evaluations and GA performance evaluations, provided information primarily for and about individuals or individual courses but were not used at the program level. Thus, while the program was engaged in a number of evaluation activities, and quite a few of those could be more specifically classified as assessment activities, only two really served the purpose of program-level assessment for the BA in AL program during the time that the case study was conducted: outcomes assessment and the college exit survey.

Conclusion

As we consider the impacts of program assessment on academic programs, it is important to first filter out activities that are not being used to improve teaching and learning at the program level. As this chapter shows, programs are often asked to engage in assessment, yet an assessment activity may not necessarily serve the purpose of improving teaching and learning in the program; rather it may be used to inform decision making at another level. In this case study, I identified two (out of nine) activities that were serving the purpose of program assessment: outcomes assessment and the college exit survey. In the following chapter, I will look in depth at the impacts of these two activities on the program, analyzing the impacts using Lattuca, et al.'s

(2006) framework. Yet, in addition to identifying the program level assessment activities relevant to this study, this chapter provides valuable information about the broader context influencing assessment impacts and helps our understanding of the case as a whole. Factors such as the university's budget crisis, the make-up of the instructors in the program, and external assessment pressures, particularly for the established status proposal, all played a role in the processes and impacts of the program assessment. Consequently, even as we zero in on the specific impacts of the outcomes assessment and the college exit survey, it is worth keeping in mind the broader contextual factors which help explain what is happening in the program assessment activities.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

In this chapter, I describe changes that took place in the BA program as a result of program assessment and compare the changes in this study to those laid out in the Engineering Change model. The chapter focuses on the impacts of the two assessment activities that were identified as serving program assessment purposes in the previous chapter: outcomes assessment and the college exit survey. However, outcomes assessment receives the most discussion as it tended to dominate the assessment activity in the program and had the most impact on the program, whereas the college exit survey played a smaller role and had only a slight impact on curriculum and instruction and out of class experiences. The chapter is organized according to the categories laid out in the Engineering Change model, reviewed below.

The Engineering Change model (*Figure 2.1*) posits that the new outcomes and outcomes assessment requirements result in program changes, including changes to curriculum and instruction, faculty culture, and administrative policies and practices. Those changes in turn lead to changes in student experiences, in and out of the classroom, which lead to changes in student learning. As the research questions for this study were developed to align with the categories in the Engineering Change model, each section in this chapter addresses a research question:

- Program Changes → RQ1. In what ways does program assessment impact policies, practices, culture, and curriculum in an academic program?
- Student Experiences → RQ2. In what ways is program assessment perceived as impacting student educational experiences in an academic program?
- Student Learning → RQ3. In what ways (if at all) is program assessment perceived as improving student learning in an academic program?

In comparing observations from the current study to the model it is worth keeping in mind certain similarities and differences in the two situations:

1. In both cases, programs are responding to external pressures to engage in assessment. In the Engineering Change model, programs were responding to professional accreditation requirements. In the BA in AL study, the program was responding to a requirement that it show outcomes assessment in its application for established status (program review) as well as strong encouragement from the university assessment office.
2. In the Engineering Change model, programs are also expected to adopt student learning outcomes set by the professional accrediting association. Therefore, program changes, particularly changes to curriculum and instruction, could come from assessment and continuous improvement practices or simply from pressure to focus instruction on specific, externally imposed outcomes. The BA in AL program does not have any externally determined outcomes, and the BA in AL program has not been pressured by the institution or any other associations to include certain content or skills in its outcomes. Therefore, program changes come principally from assessment practice and related activities.

Program Changes

In the Engineering Change model, program changes are divided into three categories: curriculum and instruction, faculty culture, and administrative policies and practices. Although listed in that order in the diagram, the model does not imply that they occur in any particular order, changes in these different categories could occur at the same time or one after the other, they have simply been grouped together to show that these program changes precede changes to

student experiences. In this chapter, I have intentionally organized the sections for program changes in the following order: faculty culture, policies and practices, and curriculum and instruction. This is because changes to faculty culture (a) tended to be the most substantial of all changes to the program, and (b) usually preceded changes to curriculum and instruction. Changes to policies and practices occurred simultaneously as faculty culture, sometimes facilitating and sometimes resulting from other processes, but changes in this category were less substantial. Each category is divided into several subcategories, some of these match the sub-categories listed in the model and some differ as the data in this case study revealed new processes and impacts which led to new sub-categories.

Faculty Culture

According to the Engineering Change framework, "changes in faculty culture would occur as faculty members engaged at a higher rate than before… in activities such as outcomes assessment, curriculum revision, and professional development related to teaching" (Lattuca et al., 2006, p. 3). The authors explain that once involved in assessment and continuous improvement activities, faculty members will begin to use assessment information for decision making, engage in more regular and systematic curricular review, and be more positively disposed toward continuous improvement and assessment activities.

The introduction of the outcomes assessment process to the BA in AL program resulted in higher rates of engagement in assessment, curricular review, and professional development activities for some, but not all faculty. However, rather than a direct link, where faculty members then use outcomes assessment findings for program decision making, the case study shows a more indirect path: Increased faculty involvement first led to intermediate impacts on faculty culture, specifically increased communication, programmatic thinking, and motivation to attend

to curriculum and instruction, and these changes then eventually impacted program decision making. Therefore, I have divided faculty culture into five sub-categories:[18]

- Faculty involvement
- Increased communication
- Programmatic thinking
- Motivation to attend to curriculum and instruction
- Using information for program decision making

Terminology. Before proceeding further, it is first important to clarify some terminology and related to program faculty. When discussing faculty involvement and faculty culture, the Engineering Change model, like much of the literature on assessment in higher education, focuses on full-time professors. However, in the BA in AL program, instructional and program planning responsibilities were undertaken by a variety of employees: graduate faculty, non-graduate faculty, APT (Administrative, Professional, Technical) staff, and GAs. In fact, the program coordinator, who also served as the primary undergraduate advisor and the FRP for the capstone course was not a professor, but rather APT. Furthermore, two-thirds of the classes offered in the BA program each semester were taught by GAs. During the study, I observed that GA experiences and views tended to differ from those of the other program instructors. Therefore, I have used the term "instructor" to refer to all those involved in instructional responsibilities in the BA program, and the terms "faculty" and "GAs" to distinguish between two groups when discussing involvement and its impacts. Faculty refers to graduate faculty, non-graduate faculty, and APT staff. GAs refers to PhD students serving as graduate teaching assistants. I have retained just the one, general term "faculty culture" to refer to the overall

[18] The three categories increased communication, programmatic thinking, and motivation to attend to curriculum and instruction emerged through thematic analysis of the qualitative data, primarily instructor interviews.

culture of the program. In some cases, I have also found it useful to separate the experiences and views of the BA Committee from those of the rest of the instructors as in the following two sections where BA Committee member involvement in assessment differed significantly from that of most faculty and GAs in the program.

Faculty involvement: BA Committee members. As a result of the encouragement and pressure to conduct outcomes assessment, BA Committee members became much more involved in assessment, curriculum review, and professional development activities. Six committee members were immersed in the outcomes assessment process from 2014 to 2016[19]. During those years, at least 50% of BA Committee time was dedicated to assessment and ensuing discussions about the curriculum, which could be considered regular, systematic curriculum review. In addition, two AL 408-Bilingual Education GAs also became involved in outcomes assessment activities when they were asked to join the committee to help during the second assessment cycle.

Members of the BA Committee also participated in more professional development opportunities related to program assessment. In the summer of 2013, in preparation for the program's involvement in outcomes assessment, the department chair participated in a week-long assessment leadership institute organized by the university assessment office. In 2015, the coordinator and I participated in a poster presentation session also organized by the university assessment office. Moreover, some of the BA Committee meetings dedicated to outcomes assessment were in effect capacity-building sessions as committee members learned how to conduct outcomes assessment.

[19] The BA Committee members changed as the GAs serving on the committee neared graduation and rotated out of the committee. A total of four different GAs served on the committee between 2014 and 2016. Therefore, while there were always six committee members, and always two GAs, the GAs were not always the same. The two program administrators and two faculty members remained the same over these two years.

Faculty involvement: General faculty and GA involvement. From 2014-2015, other than the two AL 408 GAs, there was not an increase in general instructor involvement in assessment, curriculum review, or related professional development activities; most instructors continued teaching their individual course sections with little involvement in, or even awareness of what BA Committee members were doing. In fact, the outcomes assessment process brought to light a clear need for greater instructor involvement in BA program planning. As BA Committee discussions turned to working toward program learning outcomes, scaffolding student learning, and curricular cohesion, it became clear that the lack of instructor involvement was a problem; the BA Committee needed more input and buy-in from instructors before it could implement any meaningful changes to the curriculum (personal communication, September 25, 2015). Thus, in late 2015, the BA Committee decided to conduct the BA curriculum workshops as a means of increasing instructor involvement in the BA program and specifically the curriculum review and assessment processes. The workshops succeeded in so far as four faculty members and eleven GAs not serving on the BA Committee participated in one or more workshops and became involved in discussions regarding outcomes assessment and the BA curriculum. However, participation was voluntary, and the workshops were mostly attended by those already interested in teaching, curriculum, and assessment. Instructors who had shown little interest in the BA program beyond teaching their individual classes, did not attend or increase their involvement with the program.

Although not all instructors participated in the assessment and curricular review activities, those who participated noted several important changes in faculty culture: Increased communication and sharing of course content, programmatic thinking, and increased motivation to attend to teaching and class planning.

Increased communication. The outcomes assessment activities and BA curriculum workshops opened up lines of communication between instructors and created opportunities for instructors to share information with each other about what they were doing in their courses. During the outcomes assessment process, as committee members discussed the curriculum map, key assignments, and expectations for outcomes, they would often share with each other what they did in their own classes. During the first BA curriculum workshop, participants engaged in a small group discussion activity aimed at having them share information about their courses with each other. In the second curriculum workshop, although the small group discussions were aimed at discussing the curriculum map and PLOs, participants were also sharing information about their course content and activities.

Interviews with instructors indicated that increased communication and exchanging information about course content occurred on two levels: increased communication between instructors of different courses and increased communication between instructors of the same course.

Increased communication between instructors of different courses. Both faculty and GAs mentioned that they learned a great deal from their discussions with instructors of other courses during the outcomes assessment cycles and the BA curriculum workshops, and this helped them with their own classes. Although most instructors did not make any major changes to the content or activities in their classes, they stated in interviews that they had a better idea of what to expect of students and could better link the content of their courses with the content of other AL courses during class discussions (personal communications, March 23, 2016; April 20, 2016b; May 25, 2016). For example, an instructor of AL 303-Second Language Teaching explained that she was now better able to refer students to other courses and link basic language

teaching topics to more advanced concepts and courses in applied linguistics (personal communication, April 20, 2016b).

Most instructors mentioned a general raised awareness of what was happening in other classes and with that a better sense of where their classes fit in the curriculum and an improved ability to refer to other classes when talking with students; however, few could give any concrete examples of changing the outcomes or content of their classes. One exception to this was the FRP for AL 303-Second Language Teaching, who after the second BA curriculum workshop decided to change some of the content of AL 303. He added three new topics to the course after learning that they were not covered in any other courses: critical pedagogy, English as a lingua franca, and ethics in language teaching. He also reduced the time spent on lesson planning as he learned that this was covered in other courses (personal communication, August 30, 2016). Thus, this is one example where the outcomes assessment process led indirectly to changes in the subject matter taught in the program, although the changes were not related to the PLOs.

Increased communication between instructors of the same course. Several GAs stated that they also benefitted from hearing about and seeing examples of what instructors of other sections of the same course were doing. For example, one GA who participated in the second outcomes assessment cycle remarked that she found it extremely helpful to see examples of student work from other sections of her course, AL 408-Bilingual Education, as well as the rubrics that other instructors had developed. She said,

> I think the meeting that we had where we looked at research papers, that was really helpful to see so many different writings, not just what you feel responsible for, the students who produce writing in your class, but actually seeing it from different instructors. (personal communication, May 25, 2016)

The first BA curriculum workshop appears to have been particularly effective for helping GAs who were teaching or had taught the same course exchange ideas and information. For example, in that workshop, the AL 302-Second Language Learning GAs shared information about the syllabi, schedules, and materials they were using, and discussed recent revisions to the course. Some GAs, who had been teaching other courses the previous semester, had not been aware of recent revisions to 302, and therefore only learned of the changes through informal, small-group discussions at the workshop. Other GAs, who were aware, benefitted by sharing ideas on materials and course planning with their colleagues. After the workshop was over, the AL 302 GAs continued communication through a group email thread and shared their materials on Google Drive (personal communication, November 2, 2016).

Interestingly, faculty members did not mention exchanging information with instructors of the same course in their interviews; this was something mentioned only by the GAs. Some reasons for this difference in perspective may be: (1) Several faculty members were teaching courses not taught by anyone else. For example, three of the four faculty members attending the second curriculum workshop were teaching courses not taught by anyone else in the program. (2) As relatively new AL professionals, GAs were looking for more guidance on their course planning and instruction, whereas faculty members with more years of professional experience were not (personal communication, May 25, 2016).

Programmatic thinking. One of the most important impacts of the outcomes assessment process seems to have been helping BA Committee members and instructors gain a better understanding of and think in terms of the program as a whole. While to a certain extent this came from instructors communicating and sharing with each other what was happening in other classes, it also came from learning more about the program's history, outcomes, curriculum map,

and students. The discussions of these topics, both during the outcomes assessment process and later in the two BA curriculum workshops helped instructors grasp the "bigger picture" of the program and shifted how they thought about the BA program, from a loose collection of courses and instructors – a program in name only – to a real academic program, that is, a *coordinated* set of activities aimed at helping students achieve certain goals. For example, the program coordinator remarked that the outcomes assessment process had prompted important discussions about "trying to make the curriculum a little bit more of an integrated whole rather than 11 separate pieces that we call a whole" (personal communication, April 7, 2016). Another faculty member explained in more detail:

> Once we started thinking really about [outcomes assessment], I feel like maybe we started getting a clearer picture of what the program was really about. So, before that it had just been: We have classes, we have GAs who teach them, sometimes faculty members teach them, and then in the end [we] have students do portfolios. But [there was] not really a coherent sense of what the whole program was. (personal communication, March 23, 2016)

Several faculty and GAs commented that prior to the outcomes assessment discussions and workshops they had thought only about their individual courses, not about the program. (Indeed, many had not been aware that the program had a mission or outcomes prior to the outcomes assessment process or workshops.) For instance, when asked about the most valuable aspects of the workshops, one GA replied,

> [Learning about] the relationship between the program and the … courses. I had no idea about the program objectives or outcomes or goals or any of that. I was in my little bubble with the courses that I taught. (personal communication, May 25, 2016)

The value of getting the bigger picture was almost universally agreed on by instructors involved in the outcomes assessment process and workshops:

> I feel like it's important for everybody teaching any class in a program to know what the whole program's about and to know where the students are coming from in the program, but also where the end goal is. (personal communication, March 23, 2016)

Even one instructor who was less enthusiastic about other aspects of the workshops and outcomes assessment process, remarked:

> It was good to have the big picture, I think it's necessary for every instructor who teaches in the BA program, that they need to be aware of these larger… goals. Like, what we are doing is this; and the courses that we are doing should actually encourage these SLOs. (personal communication, April 20, 2016a)

As was the case with increased communication among instructors, getting the bigger picture and beginning to think programmatically influenced instructors in different ways. Some noted they felt they benefitted from a general awareness of program goals, but had a hard time explaining how it directly affected their teaching. Others were able to name specific ways they had modified their courses or improved their teaching. Each instructor appears to have applied the information in their own way, resulting in a number of small, individual adjustments to course sections. These are described briefly below to show the variety of different adjustments that instructors made. They are taken up in more detail later in the sections on curriculum and instruction and student experiences.

Revising CLOs and syllabi to better address PLOs. Some instructors revised their CLOs and in doing so, integrated language from the PLOs. For example, an instructor for AL 302-Second Language Learning revised the syllabus to more clearly state expectations for critical

thinking skills, which are mentioned in PLO 1 (See Appendix E for the PLOs) (personal communication, August 31, 2016).

Changing Content. One instructor felt that AL 302 should and could address PLO 6. She found a reading and added a class session on the topic to her syllabus (personal communication, May 25, 2016).

Changing activities. One instructor for AL 312-Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Reading & Writing noted she did not change the content of the course, but did change some activities. After learning more about the BA program, she was better able to reflect on which activities in the course matched course and program outcomes, as well as the course's role in the general education curriculum[20]. "Thinking about what the overall outcomes were and thinking about how writing a book review wasn't really contributing to what we want to get," she changed the assignment (personal communication, March 23, 2016).

Using a negotiated syllabus. One GA said that she was supposed to use a negotiated syllabus in a course she taught, but only felt comfortable developing and working with a negotiated syllabus after she learned more about the overall program and thought about how her CLOs related to the PLOs. "I guess it gives us a clear idea of how much we can negotiate with our students" (personal communication, May 25, 2016).

Helping students get the bigger picture. Some instructors said they had already or planned to adjust their teaching to encourage students take a more holistic view of their learning. An AL 408-Bilingual Education instructor observed:

[20] In addition to meeting major requirements, students also had to take courses that met university general education requirements. This meant taking certain courses designated for oral communication, writing intensive, ethical issues, or other focus areas. AL312 was designated as an oral communication focus course.

> I like thinking globally like that, in particular for introductory courses. And, I think that might serve our students if I do that in any of the courses that I might teach in the future, just so that they can get a global view of what they've done. (personal communication, May 25, 2016)

Motivation to attend to curriculum and instruction. According to the Engineering Change model, a change in faculty culture also includes faculty members showing a "more positive disposition" toward teaching, learning, and assessment. In the AL BA program, the outcomes assessment process and curriculum workshops did not appear to change anyone's minds about teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment, or continuous improvement. Participation in the workshops was voluntary and participants tended to be individuals already positively disposed toward such activities. Likewise, BA Committee members also tended to be individuals who were interested in the undergraduate curriculum. Those faculty members who had shown little interest in being involved in the undergraduate program or assessment activities did not show any change of sentiment. However, while outcomes assessment did not change anyone's mind, it did help to encourage those instructors who were already interested in teaching and curriculum. Participants reported that the BA curriculum workshops provided increased motivation to engage in course planning and improvements. They attributed this increased motivation to three different factors: (1) affirmation of their instructional roles, (2) pride in the program, and (3) greater confidence to improve their courses.

Affirmation of Instructional Role. "Affirmation of my real instructional role as an educator." This comment was written on an anonymous survey in which BA curriculum workshop participants were asked, "What was most useful or valuable to you about the workshop?" This sentiment was repeated in several interviews where participants said that the

workshops affirmed their roles as instructors as well as researchers. In an institution where faculty are balancing trifold responsibilities of research, service, and teaching, and in a department with a strong tradition of research and graduate education, the workshops reassured faculty and GAs who wanted to attend to undergraduate instruction that it too was an important part of their professional responsibilities.

Pride in the program. Some GAs and faculty stated that they were impressed when they found out about the outcomes assessment process and the efforts the BA Committee was making to develop a more cohesive program: "I was so impressed actually by all the thought that you guys have put in to conceptualizing this program evaluation" (personal communication, April 20, 2016b). They added that realizing they were part of a program that was taking program assessment and curriculum review seriously instilled in them a sense of pride. One GA commented, "I actually felt proud of being a part of this overt effort because we're trying to put together a good program that can actually produce people who can later teach or pursue their careers" (personal communication, May 25, 2016). GAs added that they also felt a sense of pride to be included in such efforts.

> I really haven't had a lot of experience of witnessing such efforts at the program level, so I felt proud that we were making this effort. And then another thing is I felt proud personally because I was involved in this decision-making procedure (personal communication, May 25, 2016).

Increased Confidence. GAs (not faculty) indicated they felt a great deal more confidence toward revising and improving their courses as a result of their participation in the workshops: "Participating in both workshops gave me more confidence in terms of how to design…and how to lead this class better" (personal communication, May 25, 2016). The increased confidence

came from knowing the bigger picture and program level outcomes, exchanging ideas with colleagues, and learning about how to write outcomes statements and match course activities to outcomes. Thus, GAs who had been interested in improving their classes but weren't sure where to start, said they felt better able to do so after the workshops:

> I think the desire to change my syllabus was always there, but I think the workshop showed me how. And, it kind of provided me with directions to go to. …I felt like I kind of had a beacon that guides (personal communication, August 31, 2016).

Some GAs specifically mentioned workshop activities where they worked on learning outcomes statements and matching class assignments to outcomes as useful activities that provided them with the structure and guidance needed to begin revising their syllabi:

> The exercise of connecting the program outcomes with the assignment that you do and how that is assessed, …that for me was like a lightbulb went off, so I went back to my syllabus and was like, okay let's see which of the activities and which of the assessments actually reflect that, and that was very enlightening (personal communication, May 25, 2016).

An interesting extension of the increased confidence was that GAs also felt better prepared as they looked forward to job applications and their future careers. For example, the workshops gave them confidence that they could improve their syllabi which they would then include in their job application packages for academic positions (personal communication, May 25, 2016; August 31, 2016). Likewise, they added their participation in the curriculum workshops to their CVs, and felt that familiarity with curriculum review and assessment processes could be useful if they were asked to serve on departmental committees in future academic positions (personal communication, May 25,2016). Thus, they viewed outcomes

assessment and the curriculum workshops as valuable professional development opportunities that could aid them in their job searches and future careers. Faculty, on the other hand, did not mention increased confidence, perhaps because they already felt confident in their instructional abilities and were also already settled in their careers.

Using assessment information for decision making. The Engineering Change model asserts that as a result of increased involvement in assessment activities, program staff and instructors will begin using assessment information for decision making. In the BA in AL program, this would be evident if committee members were to mention outcomes assessment results, PLOs, or the curriculum map in their discussions of program matters. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some of the key program matters discussed by the committee were: whether or not to establish competitive admissions, articulation with a local community college, collaboration with the College of Education, establishing experiential learning opportunities for students, GA performance evaluations, and negotiations with graduate schools and potential employers regarding graduate qualifications. During the BA Committee meetings I observed, committee members rarely brought up assessment information when discussing these matters. Rather, committee members' principle concerns mentioned when discussing these matters were the availability of resources and expertise, university policies, class size and number of majors, and scheduling and logistics. Assessment information rarely figured into such discussions unless I, as the assessment specialist, brought it up.

However, while assessment information may not have been explicitly mentioned during meetings, interviews with committee members revealed that the assessment process indirectly helped to inform their decisions. As mentioned previously, the outcomes assessment process and curriculum workshops led to participants sharing information about courses and learning more

about the program as a whole. It also led to improved communication between instructors, including members of the BA Committee. Committee members found the information gained through these processes helpful to draw on as they made decisions. One committee member gave the example of discussions regarding articulation with the SLT program at the local community college and whether or not to waive requirements for incoming SLT students. She noted that after getting a better understanding of the BA program as a whole,

> …it was much easier to say, "No, these [SLT] syllabi as they are written now don't speak to covering any of our core program or really much of what we would need someone to know in order to waive a class for them." (personal communication, March 23, 2016)

Other committee members added that what they learned from listening to GAs during small group discussions in the first curriculum workshop gave them a better understanding of what type of preparation SLT students brought with them to the BA program which helped inform their decisions (personal communication, December 5, 2015). Thus, while the learning outcomes and outcomes assessment results did not necessarily directly impact program decisions, the increased communication and better understanding of the program that came through the assessment process, as well as a shift toward thinking programmatically, did influence committee member decisions.

Summary of faculty culture impacts. The case study provides us with a detailed picture of the changes in faculty culture that took place as the BA in AL program engaged in assessment and curriculum review and shows us a process much less straightforward than the one implied in the model. Faculty involvement increased but it took time to develop and participation was uneven. For the most part, it did not directly lead to instructors using the assessment findings for program decision making. However, there was an indirect path to change that occurred through

the outcomes assessment and curriculum review processes. That is, increased involvement in assessment and curriculum review led to changes in faculty culture, such as increased communication, programmatic thinking, and motivation, which then influenced decision making and led to changes in curriculum and instruction and student experiences.

Policies and Practices

The Engineering Change model assumes that increased assessment practice and focus on learning outcomes would be accompanied by changes in administrative policies and practices. Specifically, it states that as a result of increased assessment practice and focus on outcomes,

> faculty and administrators would adjust program practices and policies regarding salary merit increases, tenure, and promotion criteria to give greater recognition to faculty responsibility for undergraduate education and for assessment and continuous curriculum improvement. (Lattuca et al., 2006, p. 4)

The model divides the administrative policies and practices into three sub-categories: recruiting and hiring, promotion and tenure, and salary and merit increases (p. 31). There is also a brief mention of changes in resources (p. 92), but the model does not elaborate on this.

Hiring and faculty rewards. In the BA in AL study there was very little evidence of changes in recruiting and hiring, promotion and tenure, or salary or merit increases as a result of the increased focus on assessment. With regard to tenure and promotion or salary increases, teaching and service (including serving on committees such as the BA Committee) had always been among the considerations, but as this was a

research-oriented department and university, research and scholarship were priorities and remained so even after the BA program began engaging in assessment.

The department did increase its emphasis on undergraduate teaching in the hiring process, but this was not prompted by assessment. The department chair noted that undergraduate teaching was now included as part of the job description in the department's job announcements for new faculty; an applicant's willingness and ability to contribute to the undergraduate program had become an increasingly important consideration in the hiring process. However, this change had begun even before the BA Committee began engaging in outcomes assessment, and was motivated more by the large size of the undergraduate program than any concerns about learning outcomes or assessment (personal communications, November 13, 2015).

One area where assessment had the potential to influence hiring in the future was in the creation of a new specialist position in the department. Soon after the establishment of the BA program, the quick growth of the program created a strain on resources, and the AL Department decided to apply to the university for a new specialist position that could provide further administrative support for the BA program and other programs in the department. Unfortunately, the request was deferred until 2016 because of the university's financial crisis. The impetus and justification for the new position was not assessment, but rather the large size of the undergraduate program and the strain that so many undergraduate majors placed on the two program administrators. However, after beginning the outcomes assessment and program review process for the undergraduate program, the department decided to make assessment and evaluation important responsibilities for the new position they were requesting. It is not clear what will come

of this request. At the time of writing, the position was still being reviewed by university administrators and had not yet received final approval.

Allocation of departmental resources. There were several instances of resource re-allocation within the AL Department in response to the BA program's assessment needs. Perhaps the most apparent was the re-allocation of funding to a temporary, part-time assessment specialist position to help the program conduct outcomes assessment and complete the self-study for the program review[21]. This position was created through a shift in resources, that is, shifting the resources that would normally go toward funding a graduate assistantship position in the BA or ELI programs (teaching, testing, or research) to the assessment specialist position. When the assessment specialist position was finished, the funding was directed back to a regular graduate assistantship position.

In so far as personnel time is a resource, it should also be noted that a good amount of the program coordinator's time was shifted to attend to assessment matters while the program was involved in outcomes assessment and program review. I often met with the coordinator before and after BA Committee meetings to discuss assessment matters and plan next steps. The program coordinator also played an important role in gathering data for assessment as he had access to the student portfolios and college exit surveys and was in contact with alumni. Moreover, the coordinator was also the key person for reaching out to instructors and encouraging further instructor involvement. Finally, he played an important role in planning the first curriculum review workshop as he was the individual best able to provide the overview and history of the BA Program.

[21] I have included this position under resource allocation rather than hiring because it was created through a shift in resources and does not represent a change in qualifications or requirements for new hires.

BA Committee meeting time was also re-allocated to attend to assessment and curriculum review. Committee meeting agendas and minutes show that once the BA Committee began the outcomes assessment process, approximately 50% of meeting time was allocated to assessment and ensuing curriculum discussions. On some occasions, the program coordinator would plan 45 minutes of meeting time for assessment and 45 minutes for other matters. At other times, the committee would alternate between one meeting dedicated to assessment and the next meeting dedicated to other matters. The result was that some BA program matters were deferred while the committee made time for assessment. In addition, BA Committee members were sometimes given assessment homework which could require considerable time outside of meetings. For example, during each assessment cycle, each committee member was asked to rate eight to ten samples of student work. In the second assessment cycle, the work that they rated was a lengthy research paper, making the exercise quite time consuming. Finally, BA Committee members and all participating faculty set aside six hours to attend the two curriculum workshops (three hours each day) on non-instructional days[22]. The department also provided funds for refreshments and materials for the workshops.

Summary of policies and practices impacts. Re-allocation of resources within the department proved to be a key factor in the BA in AL program's ability to engage in assessment. Personnel time was the key resource that was re-allocated, but some funding that would normally go toward a GA position in teaching or research was also re-allocated to an assessment position. Formal policies related to hiring and faculty rewards did not change during the study although there is the potential for impact on a new

[22] One workshop took place on a Saturday morning. The other workshop took place on a Wednesday morning after instruction had finished for the semester.

specialist position in the future. It is worth noting that resource re-allocation was within the control of the department, whereas most policies and practices regarding hiring and faculty rewards tend to be made at the institutional level or must go through university channels.

These findings on administrative policies and practices diverge from the Engineering Change model, which emphasizes changes to faculty hiring and reward policies, and barely mentions resource allocation within a department. At the same time, the findings match the actual results from the Engineering Change study which also found that despite expectations from the model, there were very few changes to hiring and faculty reward system. Indeed, according to Lattuca, et al. (2006, p. 72) the results of their study suggest that the university "reward system is lagging behind the reality of faculty life."

The case study of assessment in the BA in AL program reveals that assessment clearly influences resource allocation within a department, and resource allocation in turn further impacts assessment practice. It suggests that resource allocation within a department should be recognized as an important factor in assessment impacts.

Curriculum and Instruction

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the Engineering Change model predicts that programs change their curricula and instructional practices as a result of the required assessment and continuous improvement efforts and also in response to the new learning outcomes required by the professional association. The model predicts changes to curricular emphasis on certain topics and instructional techniques related to the learning outcomes. For the Engineering Change study, the model predicted a greater emphasis on topics such as technical

writing or professional ethics. It also predicted greater emphasis on active learning techniques, such as group work, and less emphasis on traditional instructional techniques, such as lecture (Lattuca et al., 2006, p. 37). The Engineering Change researchers identified 14 topics and ten instructional techniques which they expected to see increase or decrease based on the new learning outcomes for ABET accredited programs.

As the BA in AL program does not have professional accreditation or externally determined PLOs, changes to curriculum and instruction would be influenced mainly by the outcomes assessment and curricular review efforts, not by any externally set outcomes. Presumably, changes to the BA in AL curriculum would bring it more in line with the program's own learning outcomes statements, and reflect topics and instructional strategies which the instructors felt needed to be emphasized so as to better help students achieve the PLOs. However, observations of meetings and workshops and interviews with the instructors revealed very different results. One of the most significant differences was that the BA Committee and instructors decided that the PLOs themselves needed to be revised, or at least further discussed and clarified. They also found a need to review aspects of program organization such as the curriculum map and course sequencing. Perhaps because of the lack of clear or agreed upon PLOs, the changes the instructors and staff made to the curriculum and instruction were rarely aimed at addressing the program learning outcomes. Moreover, many changes were not uniform or even made at the course level; rather, many were individual changes which differed by instructor and section. Finally, one significant change came from feedback on the college exit survey and did not directly relate to the PLO statements either. These changes are described in detail below; however, it did not seem appropriate or useful to organize findings by topic or instructional techniques related to the PLOs as the Engineering Change model did. Instead, I

found it useful to organize the changes to the curriculum and instruction in the BA in AL program by curricular component. This shows the various ways the assessment activities and curriculum workshops impacted the curriculum and provides insight into process as well as final impacts. The curricular components where the impacts of the assessment process and curriculum workshops could be seen to have impact were:

- Program learning outcomes statements,
- Curriculum map,
- Sequencing,
- Courses,
- Individual course sections,
- "Extra-curricular" activities and experiential learning.

Program learning outcomes statements. As noted in the previous chapter, the outcomes assessment process and curriculum workshops revealed a need for changes to overall outcomes statements developed for the program. After the first outcomes assessment cycle, two outcomes were removed from the list and the wording of others was slightly revised (Appendix E). Discussion during the two curriculum workshops revealed a need for further clarification of some statements and raised some concerns about skills, knowledge, and understandings that had not been included in the statements (personal communications, December 5, 2015; May 18, 2016). At the time of writing, the BA Committee was considering next steps for further reviewing the outcomes statements with instructors.

Curriculum map. The curriculum map was also changed as a result of the outcomes assessment process (Appendix H). The BA Committee made changes to the map in response to the removal of the two outcomes statements and also made some changes regarding in what

courses certain outcomes were assessed. Even after those changes, the outcomes assessment process raised questions about whether the curriculum map was truly representative of what was happening in the program given that many instructors were not aware of it or the outcomes statements. This was coupled with comments from an assessment specialist at the university assessment office who suggested that the program may want to revisit the curriculum map as two courses were designated as meeting every outcome and this was considered difficult to do realistically. Thus, the BA Committee decided to discuss the curriculum map with other instructors during the two curriculum workshops. Especially in the second workshop, time was spent on gaining a better understanding of which courses were addressing what outcomes. However, these workshops also revealed that without further clarification and revision of the outcomes statements themselves, the curriculum map was of limited relevance. At the time of writing, the committee had noted the need for more substantial work on the curriculum map along with the outcomes.

Course sequencing. Course sequencing also became a matter for discussion during outcomes assessment and in the workshops. Two foundation courses, AL 302 and AL 303,[23] were concurrent requirements but not pre-requisites for most other courses in the program; this meant that some students had already completed those courses prior to taking more advanced courses while others were taking them at the same time. This created variation in what kind of foundational knowledge and skills instructors could expect from students in their more advanced classes. Courses like AL 312 and 313 were a particular problem as there was a tendency for students to take one of these courses at the same time as 303, and yet they were logical

[23] AL 302-Second Language Learning; AL 303-Second Language Teaching; AL 312-Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Reading & Writing; AL 313-Techniques in Second Language Teaching: Speaking and Listening; AL 430-Pidgin and Creole English; AL 485-Professionalism in Applied Linguistics

continuations to 303. Changing 302 and 303 from co-requisites to pre-requisites for other courses was a challenge because of bureaucratic hurdles and because some students needed to take at least one other AL course at the same time as 302 and 303 in order to graduate on time. To address this issue, the advisors decided to encourage students who wanted to take another AL course at the same time as 302 and 303 to take AL 430. It was felt the 430 did not require as much prior knowledge of topics covered in 302 and 303 as other courses in the program. The advisors reported that some students were receptive to this idea, but others were averse to the idea as they had other scheduling priorities.

Course-level changes. There were two courses where FRPs implemented changes at the course level. The decision by the AL 303 FRP to adjust the content of the course, adding three new topics and deemphasizing another (first mentioned on page 115) is one example of this. There were also a couple of examples from AL 485, the capstone course: After the outcomes assessment process the instructors for AL 485 decided to revise the instructions and grading rubric for students' professional philosophy statements to make expectations clearer and improve quality. The FRP also decided to place more emphasis on having students review the PLOs and synthesize their learning from previous courses in the program. In both AL 303 and AL 485 the FRPs worked together with other instructors so that the changes were uniform in all sections of the courses.

Section-level changes. Most changes to subject matter and instructional techniques did not take place at the course level, but rather they were adjustments that instructors made to their individual sections. For example, several AL 302 instructors described changes they made to their syllabi and assignments after participating in the workshops. These improvements varied from rewriting CLOs and course descriptions, to adding new readings and activities after seeing

what other instructors were doing, to adjusting assignment expectations and instructions for students (personal communications, April 20, 2016a, May 25, 2016; November 2, 2016). Many of these changes were made after instructors shared course information with each other during and after the workshops, but all of the decisions were made individually and differed from instruction to instructor. Likewise, instructors for other courses, e.g. AL 303 and 312, reported making improvements to their individual sections of the courses (personal communications, March 23, 2016, April 20, 2016b).

"Extra-curricular" activities / experiential learning. Advisors also worked to address a student desire for more experiential learning opportunities through extra-curricular activities. This effort was driven more by the college exit survey than the outcomes assessment process. In fact, this is one significant area where the college exit survey findings had an impact on curriculum and instruction. On the college exit surveys, students repeatedly commented that there was a need for more practical and experiential learning. Even after the practicum course was implemented, graduating students continued to comment that they wished they had engaged in more experiential learning during their studies. The advisors decided to address this need by placing more emphasis on out-of-class experiential learning opportunities in the advising sessions, raising the topic early on in students' academic careers and making a conscious effort to follow up on it more in later advising sessions.

> In every advising session, seeing if there's anything in the notes that they were already doing something and asking, "Are you still doing that job as a tutor, still volunteering at [the local] elementary?" or whatever it might be. Or, encouraging somebody, who hasn't yet to think about doing it. (personal communication, April 7, 2016)

Summary of changes to curriculum and instruction. In the BA in AL program changes to curriculum and instruction took many more forms than simply changes to subject matter or instructional strategies that help bring the curriculum more in line with learning outcomes. This study reveals that in programs without externally determined outcomes, assessment can in fact result in changes to the program learning outcomes and overall program organization. It can also result in instructors making small, individual improvements to their sections, as well as changes at the course level. Indeed, in a program where most instructors are accustomed to working independently, adjustments here and there to individual sections were more common than any collaborative efforts to change course content or instructional methods. Finally, the BA in AL program shows that in cases where advisors are an integral part of the program and involved in the assessment and curricular review processes, they can play an important role in improving curriculum and instruction.

Student Experiences

The Engineering Change model posits that as a result of program changes, "the character and quality of students' educational experiences inside and outside the classroom would change in ways likely to promote student learning consistent with the … learning outcomes" (Lattuca et al., 2006, p. 4). The Engineering Change study focused on educational experiences determined through previous studies and literature to be relevant to needed changes in engineering education (e.g., Cabrera, Colbeck, & Terenzini, 2001). Under in-class experiences, the model specified three sub-categories: instructor clarity and organization, collaborative learning, and instructor interaction and feedback. Under out-of-class experiences the model specified five sub-categories: Internships or cooperative education in industry, study abroad, international travel, student design projects or competitions, and student professional societies or associations. Diversity

climate was a subcategory included in both in-class and out-of-class experiences. To gather data, the authors surveyed students who graduated in 2004 and 1994 about their experiences and compared their responses (Lattuca et al., 2006).

In this case study of assessment in the BA in AL program, I took a different approach to gathering and analyzing information on student experiences. Because the assessment process prompted the BA in AL program to begin revising its PLOs, and the BA Committee members and instructors were still struggling to develop shared understandings of the outcomes even by the end of the case study, developing specific survey items about the PLOs did not seem appropriate. Also, observations and interviews regarding the program changes indicated that many instructors were making individual changes to their sections that were not related to the PLOs. Therefore, as was the case with the section on curriculum and instruction, I felt it was important to take an open-ended approach to exploring changes in student experiences, and not just focus on experiences related to the outcomes. During interviews, I asked instructors specifically about changes to their classes or extra-curricular activities and included in my student experiences data any concrete, specific examples that instructors provided for changes they made to their classes or extra-curricular activities. Through analysis, I identified three sub-categories for in-class experiences and one sub-category for out-of-class experiences.

In-Class Experiences

- Instructor Clarity and Organization
- Holistic Learning
- Updated Topics and Materials

Out-of-Class Experiences

- Experiential Learning

Instructor Clarity and Organization

Instructor clarity and organization has emerged as an important factor in studies of student learning in higher education literature (Cabrera et al., 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In the Engineering Change model the category refers to the extent to which the instructor makes clear what is expected of students for the course, clearly explains assignments and activities, and shows how learning activities are interrelated (Lattuca et al., 2006). The BA in AL program instructors described a number of improvements to their courses which fall under this category. The instructors explained that the outcomes assessment process and workshops gave them a clearer understanding of their courses and the PLOs, which in turn helped them make their expectations clearer to their students. This was evident in revised syllabi and class schedules as well as in the rubrics and instructions they gave for class assignments. Two examples are described below.

The first example shows how one instructor revised her syllabus after attending the curriculum workshops. Figure 5.1 below shows the introductory portion of her syllabus for AL 302-Second Language Learning in 2014 before she attended the curriculum workshops. Figure 5.2 shows the same portion of her syllabus which was revised after attending the workshops.

AL 302 – 2014 Syllabus

Course Description: This introductory course provides students with a broad overview of theories and issues in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), and prepares them for more advanced courses in the undergraduate AL curriculum. It will mainly cover (a) first language acquisition, (b) theories in SLA, (c) factors affecting SLA, (d) learner language, and (e) instructed SLA.

Course Goals: This course provides students with an overview of theories and issues in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). By the end of the course, students are expected to be familiar with key fundamental concepts, theories, and empirical findings in five major areas: (1) First language acquisition, (2) Theories in SLA, (3) Individual differences in second language learning, (4) Analysis of learner language, (5) Instructed SLA.

Students will be able to articulate their own experiences, successes, and challenges in second language learning in terms of major concepts from research and theory in the area of Applied Linguistics.

- Students will develop academic writing skills.
- Students will learn about plagiarism, what the consequences of it are, and how to avoid it.
- Students will learn to use some of the research resources available at APU.

Figure 5.1. Introductory portion of AL 302 syllabus for 2014.

AL 302 – 2016 Syllabus

Course Description: This introductory course provides students with a broad overview of theories and issues in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), and prepares them for more advanced courses in the undergraduate AL curriculum. It will mainly cover (a) first language acquisition, (b) theories in SLA, (c) factors affecting SLA, and (d) learner language.

Course Goals: The course has three main goals. One is to help students understand major concepts in SLA research as described above; specifically, students will be able to apply research findings on theories and issues in SLA to understanding their experience as a second language learner, teacher, parent or administrator. The second is to promote critical thinking skills. Through class discussions, presentations, and writing reaction papers, students will practice evaluating assumptions made, evidence used, and conclusions drawn in academic research. The last is to help students hone their writing skills as a learning tool. Four writing workshops will cover library/web research, idea generation/organization, citations/references, and peer review/proofreading.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of the semester, students will be able to…

(1) Identify major strands of research in first and second language acquisition and recall figures who made important contributions to each strand.
(2) Employ key concepts in SLA to explaining and appraising their own experience as a learner, teacher, parent, administrator, and/or other types of decision makers with regard to second language.
(3) Critically review claims and arguments in SLA research studies via presentations and discussions.
(4) Organize their ideas and criticisms on theories and issues in SLA in coherent and cohesive manners in writing,
   - Use some of the research resources available at APU for literature review, and
   - Use proper citations and make an APA-style reference list to avoid plagiarism.

Figure 5.2. Introductory portion of AL 302 syllabus for 2016.

In the first syllabus, the course goals are essentially a restatement of the course description and the outcomes are quite vague. In the second syllabus, the instructor was better able to articulate the goals and outcomes of the course. The instructor explained that she used the active verb list (Appendix I) to write the student learning outcomes in an effort to "give students a clearer idea in terms of what's expected of them" (personal communication, August 31, 2016).

The instructor also explained that she was better able to articulate her expectations for critical thinking after discussing PLO1 with other instructors during the workshops.

The second example shows how instructors revised their rubrics to clarify assignment expectations. In this example, the AL 485-Professionalism in Applied Linguistics instructors revised the rubric for the professional philosophy statement that students produced for their class. After participating in the two cycles of outcomes assessment, the AL 485 instructors decided they were not satisfied with the quality of the student work they received, especially, the kind of support students provided for their values and beliefs. Below is an excerpt of the rubric used by instructors in 2013 followed by an excerpt from the 2016 rubric. (For the complete rubrics see Appendix J).

	Unacceptable (revise and resubmit)	Meets minimum expectations	Exceeds minimum expectations	Pts
Content & use of examples	Drifts off subject, or never addresses values and beliefs. No examples, or examples that don't match the aspect of philosophy.	Remains relevant to the individual's values and beliefs. The reader can clearly identify what these values and beliefs are. Examples apply to aspects of philosophy	Discussion of values and beliefs reflects deep understanding of self and AL. Connects values and beliefs to AL theory if/where relevant. Examples give the reader a relevant and clear picture of the author doing these things in a teaching situation.	/3

Figure 5.3. Portion of the 2013 AL 485 rubric for professional philosophy statement

	Unacceptable (revise and resubmit)	Meets minimum expectations	Exceeds minimum expectations	Pts
What: *Content & details:* *Expresses Values & Beliefs*	Leaves the reader with a limited understanding of the author's values and beliefs	Relevant to the author's values and beliefs. The reader can identify what these values and beliefs are	Discussion of values and beliefs reflects deep understanding of self and AL and/or other relevant fields	/3

What supports your ideas: *Knowledge of AL supports values & beliefs*	Shows limited or no knowledge of AL theories or concepts	Evidence of knowledge of AL concepts used in support of stated values & beliefs	Philosophy is clearly informed and supported by research and best [effective] practices in AL or another relevant field	/2
How: *Use of examples of putting beliefs into practice*	No examples, or examples that don't match the aspect of philosophy	Examples are relevant and apply to aspects of philosophy	Examples give the reader a relevant and clear picture of the author doing these things in a teaching (or other professional) situation	/2

Figure 5.4. Portion of the 2016 AL 485 rubric for professional philosophy statement

In Figure 5.3, values, beliefs, support, and examples were combined in the same category, making it easy for students to overlook important details, especially with regard to support and examples. In Figure 5.4, the category has been broken down into three separate categories, with each category given a point value – a way of emphasizing to students the importance of providing quality support and examples for values and belief statements. Moreover, by creating three categories, the instructors have been able to provide more detail about their expectations. For example, under "What supports your ideas" the instructors have included the expectation that students include "evidence of knowledge of AL concepts." This was not articulated in the 2013 rubric.

Holistic Learning

Holistic learning is not included in the Engineering Change model, but it appears elsewhere in higher education and assessment literature (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Biggs, 2003; Tagg, 2003) as an approach to learning in which students are encouraged to make connections so they can see how the "elements of their studies are interconnected and relevant" (Tagg, 2003, p. 350). BA in AL instructors described a number of changes to their classes that showed steps toward taking a more holistic approach to learning. The instructors described a number efforts to help

students connect what they were learning in their classes to other AL classes and think about the bigger picture of what it means to be an AL professional. This came as a result of the instructors learning about what was being taught in other classes and learning more about the program as a whole. In most cases, the changes were simple references to content taught in other classes; however, these references were useful in prompting students to think more holistically. One instructor for AL 303- Second Language Teaching gave several concrete examples of how she had begun including more references to other courses in her class. For example, when discussing language teaching methodology, the instructor asked students to connect the teaching methods in her course to language learning theories taught in AL 302- Second Language Learning:

> Like linking 302 with 303, that is something that comes up a lot... Because when you talk about [the] audiolingual [method] and you say, "Oh, what is the language learning theory? … Behaviorism!" – They can kind of link the two together.

Additionally, she gave several examples of how she mentioned more advanced applied linguistics courses and linked them to the language teaching content students were being introduced to. This served to help the students connect applied linguistics topics to classroom teaching and helped them think ahead about other courses they would take later in the program.

> When we talk about classroom assessment, it's a nice link to [say], "You will be learning this … in 490 [Language Testing]. I can only give you a brief outline of things that are in the … field, language testing is a whole field that you can learn about …, so look forward to doing more on this kind of thing in 490."

Likewise, when the class discussed a reading on teaching pronunciation which included quite a bit of phonology, she mentioned AL460-English Phonology as a course where students could study the topic in depth:

> So I just mention things like, "See how that course would be beneficial for you for teaching pronunciation… ? It's an elective, [but] if you are interested in teaching pronunciation in the future, …then make sure you take that course." (personal communication, April 20, 2016b)

While most examples of such in-class experiences were similar references to the content of other courses, there was one instance where instructors expanded a class activity to encourage students to integrate what they had learned in various courses and apply it to their career goals. This occurred in the AL 485 capstone course, Professionalism in AL. Prior to the outcomes assessment process the instructors had spent a class session discussing the BA in AL PLOs with the students and then asked them to think about how they had fulfilled the outcomes, however, they had not gone into great depth on the topic. After engaging in the outcomes assessment process, the instructors decided it was important to spend more time on this so that students could synthesize their learning, articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they had developed, and apply them to future career goals. The activity was expanded to a multi-step process where students (1) reviewed PLOs and discussed what they meant; (2) discussed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that were relevant to the PLOs; and (3) in pairs chose one PLO to study and present on in depth, including discussion of how the knowledge, skills, and dispositions can be applied to job or graduate school applications. This activity took place at the beginning of the semester and was spread out over multiple class sessions. The instructors then referred back to the activity later in the semester when students were working on their CVs, professional philosophy statements, etc. (personal communication, April 7. 2016).

Updated Topics and Materials

Keeping up with new developments in research, theory, and literature is a challenge for university scholars in any field, and applied linguistics is no exception. University instructors face the additional challenge of determining how and when to best incorporate the new information and literature into their courses. The study of the BA in AL program showed that the curriculum review workshops helped instructors update their courses by incorporating new topics and new texts and materials into their classes. For example, one instructor mentioned new readings he added to his AL 302- Second Language Learning course after participating in a curriculum workshop and sharing information with other 302 instructors (personal communication, November 2, 2016). He explained that through exchanging information with other instructors, he learned that the other instructors were now incorporating more up-to-date content, such as new topics related to the social dimensions of language learning and language learning technology, and using more recently published texts to address various topics in the course. Showing me his syllabi from spring 2015 and spring 2016, he pointed out a number of changes he had made to bring his readings and topics up-to-date. For instance, his syllabus showed that he now used several readings from the book *Introducing Second Language Acquisition: Perspectives and Practices* by K.M. Hummel (2014), a book which the instructor felt was more up-to-date and relevant than the previous texts he had used. There were also five new articles related to language acquisition and technology, and he had added two new Ted Talks to the course material.

The changes to AL 303- Second Language Teaching subject matter (first described on page 115 under faculty culture and mentioned again on page 133 under curriculum and instruction) could also be categorized as updated content and materials. The subject matter added

to AL 303 (critical pedagogy, English as a lingua franca, and ethics in language teaching) are relatively new topics for an introductory language teaching course. Traditionally, introductory language teaching courses have included subject matter such as the history of language teaching methods from grammar translation to communicative language teaching, an introduction to teaching the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), and other practical topics such as lesson planning, classroom management, etc. The topics introduced by the AL 303 FRP reflect recent developments in education and applied linguistics and could be considered quite avant-garde for an introduction to second language teaching course.

Experiential Learning

The only concrete changes in out-of-class experiences described by instructors or staff were in experiential learning. As mentioned on page 134, the college exit survey indicated that graduating students often wished they had participated in more experiential learning opportunities during their university careers. The AL major advisors, therefore, decided to place greater emphasis on experiential learning during advising sessions with students, raising the idea early in students' careers, encouraging ongoing participation in experiential learning, and providing students with a variety of options. The advisors discussed a number of different kinds of experiential learning opportunities with students in addition to the practicum course, these included: volunteer opportunities at schools, churches, or community organizations; a student interchanger program with short-term international students at the university; paid tutoring opportunities on and off campus; and paid part-time work opportunities on campus or at schools or community organizations. The advisors did not keep records on student participation rates in experiential learning either prior to or after incorporating it more into advising, so it was not

possible to say for certain if participation had changed; however, the program coordinator felt it had:

> My impression is that more students are doing something, and some of them are starting to do experiential volunteering or student-help jobs a bit earlier than they would have if we didn't incorporate it into advising. (personal communication, January 17, 2017)

Student Learning

The Engineering change framework suggests that changes in the program and student experiences lead to changes in student learning related to the learning outcomes. The Engineering Change study investigated this by surveying graduates and employers on student knowledge and skills in areas related to the learning outcomes. For example, students were asked to rate their abilities to apply knowledge of math or carry out an experiment (Lattuca et al., 2006, p. 359). The study then compared the responses for 1994 graduates to those for the 2004 graduates to determine if there had been any change.

The different circumstances of the BA in AL program created a challenge for investigating impacts of assessment on student learning. As mentioned previously, the assessment process stimulated discussion and a revision of the program learning outcomes which was still ongoing at the end of the case study. Therefore, the outcomes were still in flux, and most of the changes in the program and student experiences were not directed toward learning outcomes. Additionally, the program had only been involved in outcomes assessment and curricular review for a little over two years, and while this may have seemed like a long time to BA Committee members, it was a slow process that was only beginning to bear fruit in terms of changes to student experiences as the process first needed time to address issues like faculty involvement and faculty culture. Many of the changes to the student experiences described by

instructors took place in Fall Semester 2016, and at the time of interviews, instructors were still in the process of implementing the changes and could not yet say if there were changes in student learning. In other cases, instructors had difficulty stating specifically what changes in learning they expected to see. When trying to determine what, if any, influence the assessment processes had on student learning, the general conclusion was that it was too soon to tell.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Summary and Discussion

This study investigated the impacts of program assessment on an undergraduate program in applied linguistics. During the course of the case study, the program was engaged in two program assessment activities: outcomes assessment and a college exit survey. Starting with the conceptual model from Lattuca, et al.'s (2006) Engineering Change study, I analyzed the impacts of these two assessment activities, adapting the model to allow for more detail and new findings through the course of the study. Below is a summary and discussion of my findings for each section of the model: program changes, student experiences, and student learning, followed by discussion of the study's implications and limitations.

Program Changes Summary and Discussion

Of the three categories of program changes, assessment had the most impact on faculty culture. This was evident in the form of increased communication between instructors, instructors engaging in more programmatic thinking, and increased motivation expressed by those interested in teaching and course development. Through these changes, assessment also indirectly influenced program decision-making by BA Committee members. However, before most of these changes could take place, the BA Committee first had to increase instructor involvement in the program and assessment activities. Changes to policy and practices were most evident in the departmental re-allocation of resources such as personnel and committee time, and the temporary re-allocation of funding for assessment expertise. Assessment did not impact hiring or promotion practices or policies. Finally, changes to curriculum and instruction included changes to program outcomes and organization, changes to subject matter and instructional methods which were implemented at the course and individual section level, and greater

emphasis on extra-curricular experiential learning opportunities through advising. Thus, the BA in AL study shows results that are somewhat different from the original Engineering Change model, as can be seen in the side by side comparison in Figure 6.1 below.

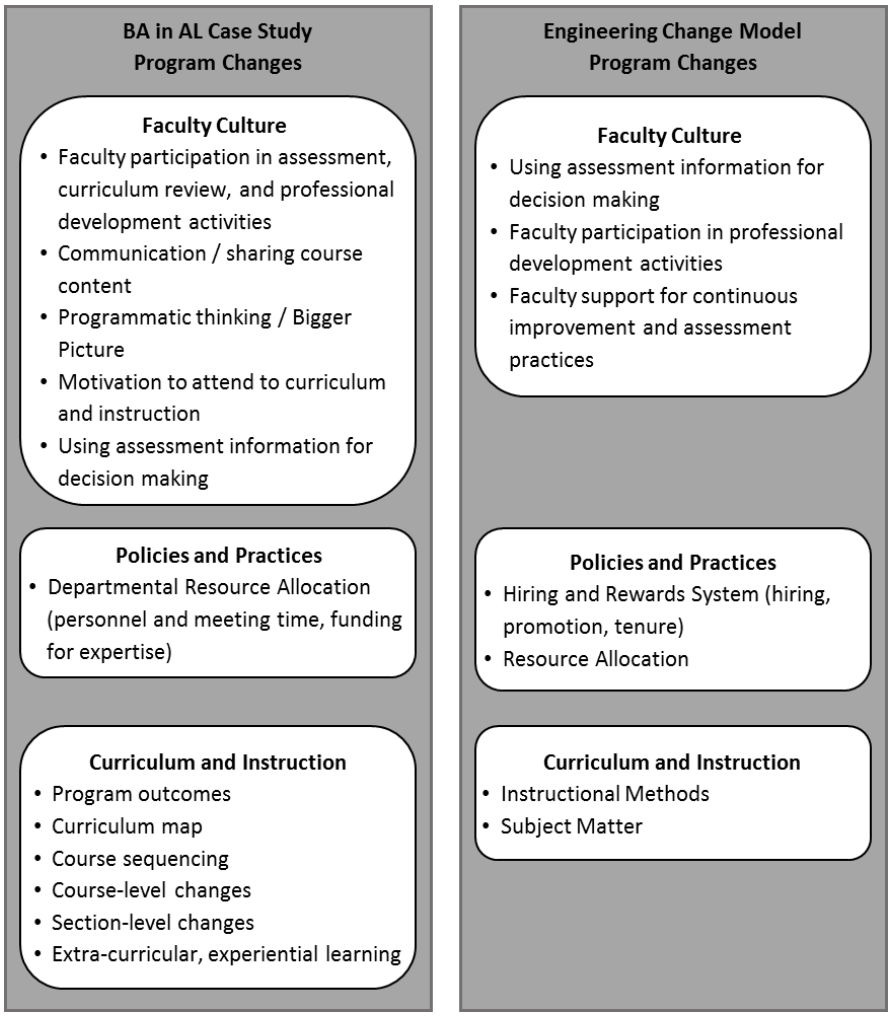

Figure 6.1. Side by side comparison of program changes in the BA in AL case study and the Engineering Change model.

Faculty culture. In addition to showing what program changes took place, the study has also provided information on the order in which the program changes took place and revealed a multi-step process for changes to faculty culture. Figure 6.2 shows the sequencing of events for program changes. In Figure 6.2, faculty culture essentially changes through a three-step process: (1) Increasing instructor involvement; (2) increasing communication, programmatic thinking,

and motivation; (3) using assessment information for decision making. Perhaps most importantly, with only one exception, almost all changes to curriculum and instruction took place only after changes to faculty culture and policies and practices.

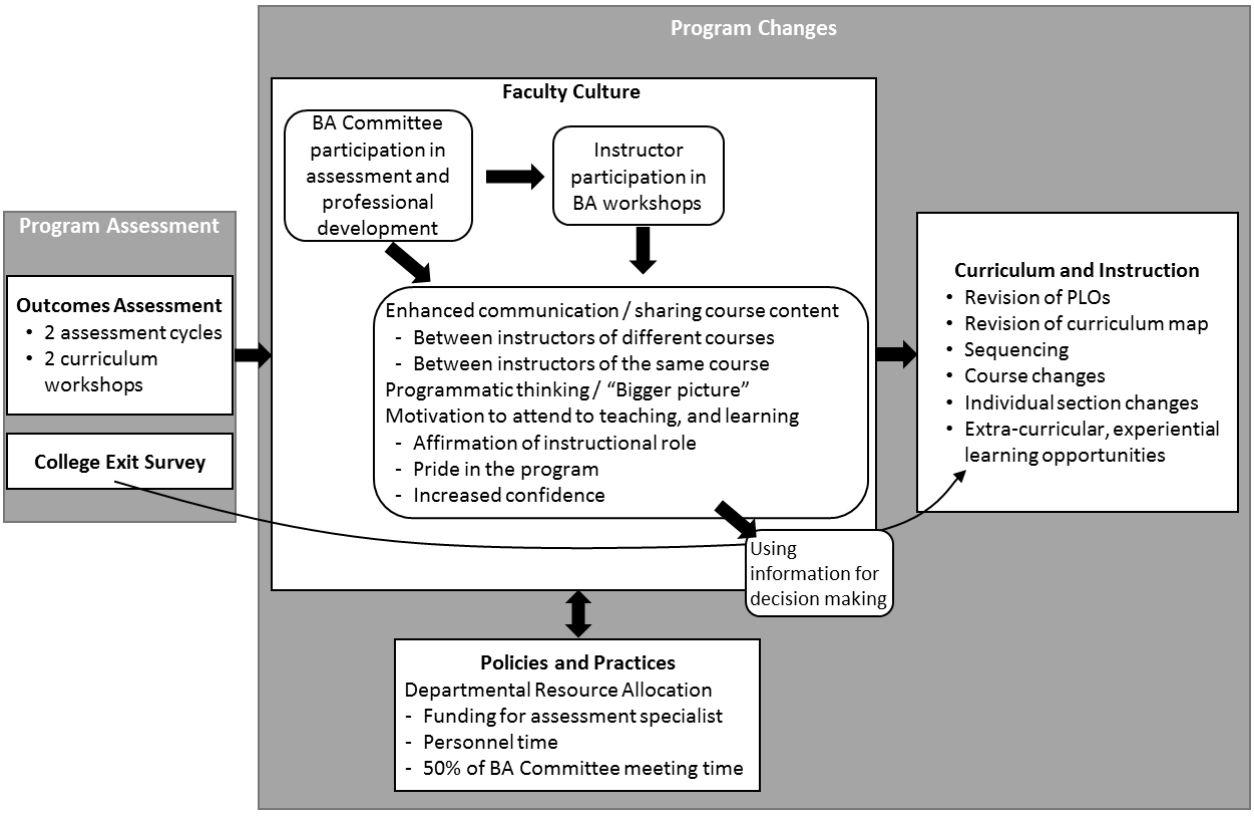

Figure 6.2. Detailed diagram of the program changes in the BA in AL program.

The one exception (in which faculty or staff made changes to curriculum and instruction without first needing further instructor involvement or changes to faculty culture) was the advisors' decision to increase emphasis on experiential learning opportunities after seeing the results of the college exit surveys. In making this change, the advisors were able to act directly on the assessment findings. However, the conditions for this change were exceptional: the advisors were also program administrators and instructors so they were already involved and invested in program development and the assessment process; they already had the bigger picture of the program; they were highly motivated to attend to teaching and learning; they

communicated regularly with each other about the students; and as both advisors and program administrators they had the authority and ability to make the change without needing the collaboration of other instructors. In short, for the individuals involved in implementing this change to curriculum and instruction, the elements of faculty culture in the diagrams above were essentially already in place. This seems to indicate that the direct use of assessment findings is possible when certain faculty culture conditions have already been met. However, these conditions were rare in the BA in AL program, and the indirect path to changes in curriculum and instruction through faculty culture was much more common.

The case study also highlights the importance of process use in assessment impacts. According to Patton (2008, p. 109), "Process use occurs when those involved in the evaluation learn from the evaluation process itself or make program changes based on the evaluation process rather than findings." One way evaluation processes can have a positive impact is by "enhancing shared understandings" among stakeholders (Patton, 2008, p. 162), for example, when stakeholders clarify the goals and mission of a program or discuss their different views on how a program works. In the BA in AL program this occurred as participants shared information about their courses, discussed their interpretations of the PLOs, and learned about the program history and organization. Based on their new understandings of the program, instructors then went on to modify their courses or course sections.

Patton (2008, p. 159) adds that another way the process may impact a program is by "increasing engagement, self-determination, and ownership" for those participating in the evaluation process. This was evident in explanations instructors gave for their increased motivation to attend to curriculum and instruction. GAs particularly appreciated the opportunities to be involved in the assessment activities and attributed their decisions to improve their courses

in part to the sense of ownership and pride they felt as a result of being included in discussions about the BA program. Indeed, many of the changes that occurred in the program came as a result of the instructors being engaged in the assessment process rather than as a result of assessment findings.

Administrative policies and practices. The findings on administrative policies and practices show the importance that the re-allocation of departmental resources plays in program assessment. The results for this category, rather than just adding detail, actually differed from the model considerably. The model assumed there would be changes to hiring and promotion policies and practices which normally need to be approved at the institutional level; however, the BA in AL case study did not show this occurring. At the same time, the model did not include resource re-allocation at the departmental level, which proved important in the case study. The study suggests that departmental resource re-allocation may be worth including under administrative policies and practices in models in the future, and it could be an important topic for future research on program assessment implementation and sustainability.

There was one complicating factor in the re-allocation of resources in this study which also bears consideration: the influence of the application for established status on the program's level of engagement in assessment activity and commitment of resources. The application for established status required that the program conduct a self-study and engage in outcomes assessment. This prompted the program to hire a part-time assessment specialist and dedicate personnel and meeting time to the outcomes assessment process. It is not clear to what extent the re-allocation of resources would have happened if the external pressure from the established status application had not been there. On the one hand, the BA Committee showed a strong interest in using assessment for program improvement purposes and went beyond simple

compliance activities. On the other hand, once the application for established status was completed, the program did not continue to allocate the same amount of time and resources to assessment as it had previously. In any case, the re-allocation of departmental resources appears to be an important factor in program assessment and is worth further consideration and investigation.

Curriculum and instruction. The findings with regard to curriculum and instruction point to the importance of maintaining a broad view of curriculum. Lattuca and Stark (2009, p. 3) note that in higher education today, curriculum is generally viewed as "the formal academic experience of a student." It includes traditional learning experiences, such as courses and workshops, but may also include other learning experiences "beyond what we typically call a course" including what traditionally would have been considered extra-curricular activities. Yet, despite this, when discussing a program's curriculum or engaging in program assessment, many faculty and assessment specialists tend to focus in on the list of courses offered in the program and the course content. This study showed the importance of considering other aspects of the curriculum, such as program organization, advising, and voluntary or paid experiential learning opportunities when carrying out or researching program assessment.

Finally, the study also shows the important role that program learning outcomes play in guiding assessment practices and models. The findings of the BA in AL program differ considerably from the Engineering Change model because the BA in AL program did not have externally set outcomes for professional accreditation to guide changes to curriculum and instruction. Moreover, the BA in AL program's own internally developed outcomes had been developed without the full involvement of the faculty and the outcomes lacked clarity and buy-in. Therefore, most changes instructors made to curriculum and instruction were not directly

related to the outcomes statements. The findings indicate that if outcomes assessment is to be the key assessment activity, and if changes to subject matter and instructional strategies are expected to directly link to the PLO statements, then ensuring that there is faculty agreement with regard to PLO meaning and use is an important first step.

Student Experiences Summary and Discussion

The program changes to curriculum and instruction had a trickle-down effect on student experiences. The changes to in-class experiences were improved instructor clarity and organization, steps toward more holistic or integrated learning, and updated content and materials. The one change to out-of-class experiences was a perceived increase in participation in experiential learning activities. A side by side comparison of the results of the BA in AL case study and the Engineering Change model can be seen in Figure 6.3. That the changes to student experiences for the BA in AL case study differ somewhat from the Engineering Change model is to be expected as the model focused on a limited number of changes that had been pre-identified as needed for engineering education, and the case study allowed for any changes that emerged over the course of the study. Also, it can be assumed that an applied linguistics program may need to focus on improving different experiences than an engineering program. In fact, course syllabi and my discussions with instructors indicated that collaborative learning probably did not emerge among the changes in student experiences in the BA in AL program because the instructors were already using a fair amount of collaborative learning in their courses before the program began the assessment process. Further studies of assessment in different academic programs would no doubt reveal a wide variety of changes in student experiences depending on the field and the needs of the particular program.

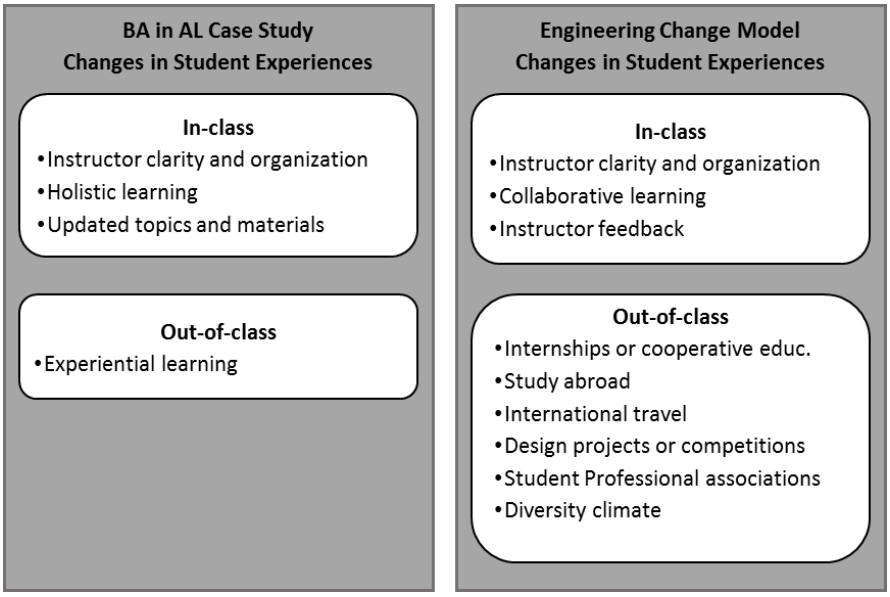

Figure 6.3. Side by side comparison of changes in student experiences in the BA in AL case study and the Engineering Change model.

Figure 6.4 shows more detail and the links between the changes to curriculum and instruction and student experiences. Program-level curricular changes, such as the revisions to the PLOs, curriculum map, and sequencing, have not yet trickled down to impact student experiences, most likely because considerable work is still needed on PLO clarity and faculty buy-in. Indeed, these curricular changes could be viewed as intermediate steps, which would eventually influence course and section-level changes to subject matter and instructional strategies which then lead to changes in student experiences. Nevertheless, the changes to student experiences show that even without uniform efforts to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet PLOs, engaging in the assessment process can still result in positive impacts on student experiences

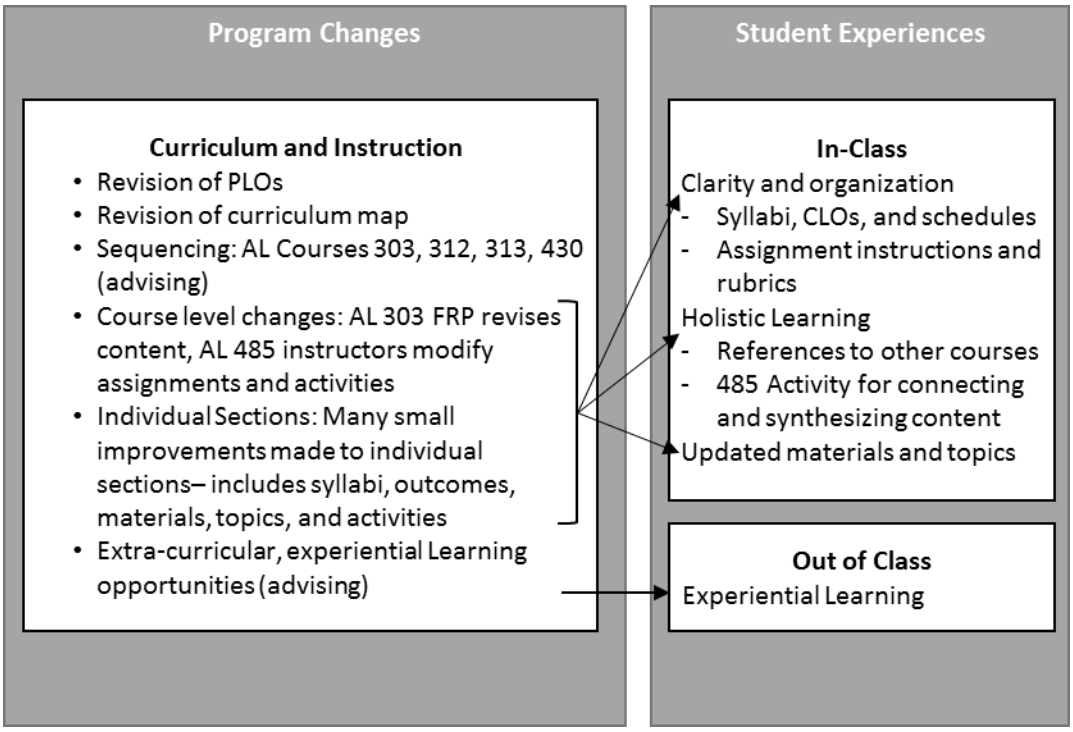

Figure 6.4. Diagram of the changes to curriculum and instruction and changes to student experiences

Student Learning Summary and Discussion

In the BA in AL case study, it was difficult to identify what, if any, changes to student learning took place after two and a half years of assessment activities. My conclusion, after asking several instructors about changes to learning, was that it was too soon to tell. Identifying changes to student learning was a challenge for a number of reasons: Many changes were implemented in Fall Semester 2016 and results weren't yet evident when the case study was concluded, some instructors who had implemented changes earlier had difficulty articulating what improvements in student learning they expected to see, and the lack of focus on PLOs in the modifications made it difficult to specifically look for changes to learning outcomes. This result differed from the Engineering Change model and study which was able to focus in on and find changes to eleven student learning outcomes predetermined by the professional

accreditation association. However, it is important to note that the Engineering Change model was designed to trace changes in student learning over ten years, a considerably longer period of time than the BA in AL case study. This finding raises an important question: How much time is needed for assessment to result in meaningful, identifiable improvements to learning? In this program, two and a half years was not enough.

Summary Diagram of Impacts of Assessment on the BA in AL Program

Figure 6.5 summarizes in diagram form the findings discussed above. Expanding and further modifying the Engineering Change model, it shows what changes took place in the BA in AL program as a result of the program engaging in assessment and how the various changes link to each other.

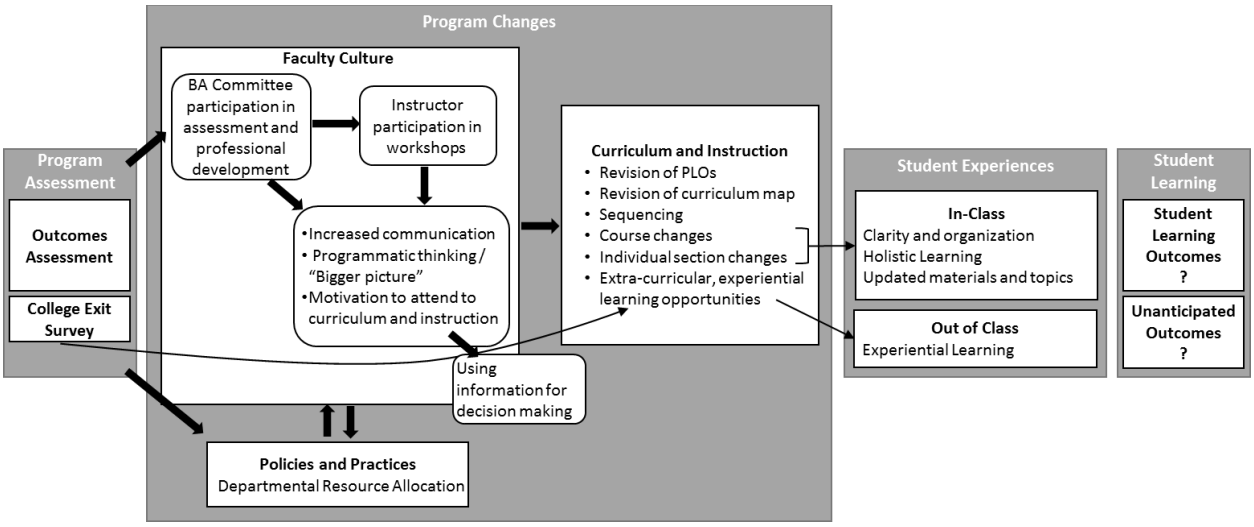

Figure 6.5. Summary diagram of the impacts of assessment on the BA in AL program.

Limitations of the Model

The Engineering Change model and the BA in AL case study take a program theory evaluation approach to investigating assessment impacts. Program theory evaluation makes "explicit the underlying assumptions about how a program is expected to work – the program theory" - and uses that theory to guide the investigation (Rogers, Petrosino, Huebner, & Hacsi,

2000, p. 5). That is, investigators lay out the sequence of events or mechanisms by which the inputs are expected to translate into desired outcomes and then study the program to determine if this is truly what is happening in the program. The program theory made explicit in the Engineering Change model was that the new outcomes and the new assessment and continuous improvement requirements from EC 2000 would first lead to program changes (in the form of changes to the curriculum, faculty culture, and administrative policies and practices), which would lead to changes in student experiences, which would eventually lead to improved student learning. This program theory guided the data collection and analysis for the Engineering Change study and to a certain extent the BA in AL case study.

A program theory approach is very useful when researchers want to know not just whether a program or practice works but how it is expected to work. Thus, for a topic such as program-level assessment, where much more information is needed regarding what is happening and what changes are taking place in programs that engage in assessment, a program theory approach is very useful in helping to fill this gap in knowledge. At the same time, a program theory approach has its drawbacks. While it helps us understand how a program works overall, it often lacks the more in-depth discussion of the social science theory undergirding the components of the program (Weiss, 2000). For example, the Engineering Change model assumes changes in faculty culture will be manifested as increased faculty participation in assessment, curriculum review, and professional development and increased faculty use of assessment information for decision making and curricular planning. However, it does not discuss higher education literature on faculty culture in detail or explain the basis for operationalizing changes

to faculty culture in this way[24]. The BA in AL case study provides more detail on changes to faculty culture, but as it uses the same program theory approach, it still lacks the in-depth discussion of the undergirding theory and literature on faculty culture. It is beyond the scope of this study, but future discussion and analysis focusing on the theory and literature relevant to each component of the program model would add to our understanding of assessment and help those seeking to apply the model in future assessment research.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have a number of implications for assessment practice. The lessons learned and the insights gleaned from discussion above should prove useful for faculty members embarking on assessment as they can consider what to expect during the assessment process, and for faculty already involved in the assessment process as they can compare changes in their programs to the ones described in the study. However, there are also implications for the practical literature which warrant highlighting and further explanation. The implications for the practical literature address the assessment cycle model in general, and two specific steps in preparation for the assessment process. Each of these topics (the assessment cycle model, faculty culture, and taking stock of goals and outcomes) is discussed in detail below.

The assessment cycle model. The results of the study have implications for the way the assessment process is explained and framed for educators in the assessment cycle model. Assessment specialists typically use the assessment cycle model (See Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2)

[24] Lattuca et al (2006) do provide some explanation of the active learning theory and research that influenced their assumptions for in-class experiences, but other components of the model lack deeper theory and discussion of the relevant literature.

to explain and present the assessment process to educators[25]. However, there has been some criticism that this model oversimplifies the process (Jankowski, 2012), a criticism reinforced by the fact that most programs are not able to "close the loop," that is complete the assessment cycle with meaningful improvements to teaching and learning in the program. The results of this study support assertions that the representation of assessment outlined in the assessment loop is too focused on direct findings use while much of the impact comes from indirect process use. Moreover, the unidirectionality of the arrows in the model imply a smooth sequencing of steps; whereas, when there is an effort to really tackle meaningful change, the process tends to result in more backtracking and detours (Jankowski, 2012). In addition, as was apparent in this case study, faculty culture plays a significant role in how directly and smoothly a program may move through the assessment cycle. A new model or approach to explaining assessment practice that allows for more recognition of process use, detours, and faculty culture could help to address the concerns of educators when their efforts and experiences don't match what is presented in the assessment cycle model. Also, explicitly recognizing improvements made at the program, course, and individual section level that do not directly relate to an outcome being assessed, but nevertheless contribute to program improvements, could help faculty see more value in program assessment.

Faculty culture. The importance of the role of faculty culture is not new in assessment literature (e.g., See Hutchings, 2010), however it is often glossed over in practice[26]. This study underscores the need to address issues of faculty culture if programs really intend to engage in

[25] E.g. The following websites from university assessment office webpages are just a few of the many that present the assessment process in a typical assessment cycle: https://assessment.gwu.edu/assessment-cycle, https://www.ctl.uga.edu/pages/assessment-cycle, https://www.lanecc.edu/assessment/basic-assessment-cycle, https://www.jmu.edu/studentaffairs/staff-resources/saac/tools/assessment-cycle.shtml,

[26] For example, very few assessment office webpages include any mention of faculty culture in their explanation of the assessment process. In fact, none of the webpages listed in the previous footnote mention faculty culture.

assessment practices that result in meaningful improvements to teaching and learning. For example, in this study, the BA Committee realized it needed to address issues of instructor involvement in the program, assessment, and the curriculum review process, before it could make any substantial changes to curriculum and instruction. The study also points to additional changes to faculty culture which came as a result of increased involvement and were crucial to the changes in curriculum and instruction and student experiences: communication between instructors (about courses and teaching), programmatic thinking, and motivation to attend to teaching and learning. While assessment literature tends to focus on cultivating a culture of assessment in an institution or program, these findings support arguments (e.g., Suskie, 2009) that before cultivating a culture of assessment, assessment specialists or faculty may first want to focus on cultivating a culture of learning – that is, a culture that values and promotes teaching and learning. Particularly at research universities, where teaching has traditionally taken a back seat to research, and undergraduate education is often secondary to graduate education, it may be necessary to first engage in discussions about curriculum design, teaching and learning, and faculty involvement in and collaboration on curriculum[27] before a program can really get going on assessment (Suskie, 2009, p. 72).

Goals and outcomes. Practical literature typically presents the first step in the outcomes assessment process as either (a) develop program goals and outcomes, or (b) if the program already has goals and outcomes, select an outcome to assess. However, this case study revealed that even when program goals and learning outcomes statements already exist, there is not necessarily agreement on those goals or outcomes statements, nor buy-in from faculty on using

[27] While less common in assessment literature, the need for a faculty culture of collaboration is a common topic in the higher education curriculum development literature and discussed as a key factor in successful curricular renewal (e.g., see Briggs, 2007).

the outcomes to guide curriculum and instruction. It highlights the importance of considering the following when working with existing outcomes statements: Who was involved in the development of the goals and outcomes? How have goals and outcomes been used in program planning (if at all) since their development? and Is there widespread awareness and understanding of the goals and outcomes among the current instructors? It also highlights the importance of maintaining awareness of goals and outcomes among instructors and staff when there is instructor turnover or if there is a large department and some faculty members do not teach in the program every year. In short, this study suggests that an option (c) may be necessary which involves taking stock of the use of existing goals and learning outcomes in curriculum planning before assuming that they are ready for assessment.

Implications for Research

This case study also points to a number of implications and questions for further research. In the following section, I discuss the use of the Engineering Change model as an analytic framework for this study and its potential for use for future research on assessment in higher education programs. I then discuss two topics for further research brought to light by the study: administrative policies and practices and assessment in accredited and nonaccredited programs.

The Engineering Change model. With few existing frameworks for analyzing assessment impacts, I used the Engineering Change model, a model designed to study the impacts of new outcomes assessment requirements on engineering programs, for my case study of assessment in an applied linguistics program. Initially, I was somewhat doubtful about the applicability of the Engineering Change model to a situation where the program does not have professional accreditation pressures. Yet, despite the difference in circumstances and types of programs, the model proved effective as a basic framework for studying the applied linguistics

program's assessment impacts. Indeed, by applying the model to an in-depth case study with detailed, qualitative data and allowing new sub-categories to emerge, the study served as a kind of magnifying glass revealing details about each section, category, and sub-category of the model, and bringing to light new information about important aspects of assessment processes and impacts, such as intermediate steps, process use, and unexpected impacts.

The study shows that with some modifications the Engineering Change model is effective for studying impacts of program assessment even in programs without professional accreditation pressures and outcomes. Below is a suggestion for a modified version of the model which could be used to guide further research. Further case study research, applying the model to program assessment in various contexts, would be useful to further test out the model and flesh out details on impacts at each stage. Further investigation into theory and literature relevant to each component of the model would also help flesh out details and further our understanding of assessment impacts.

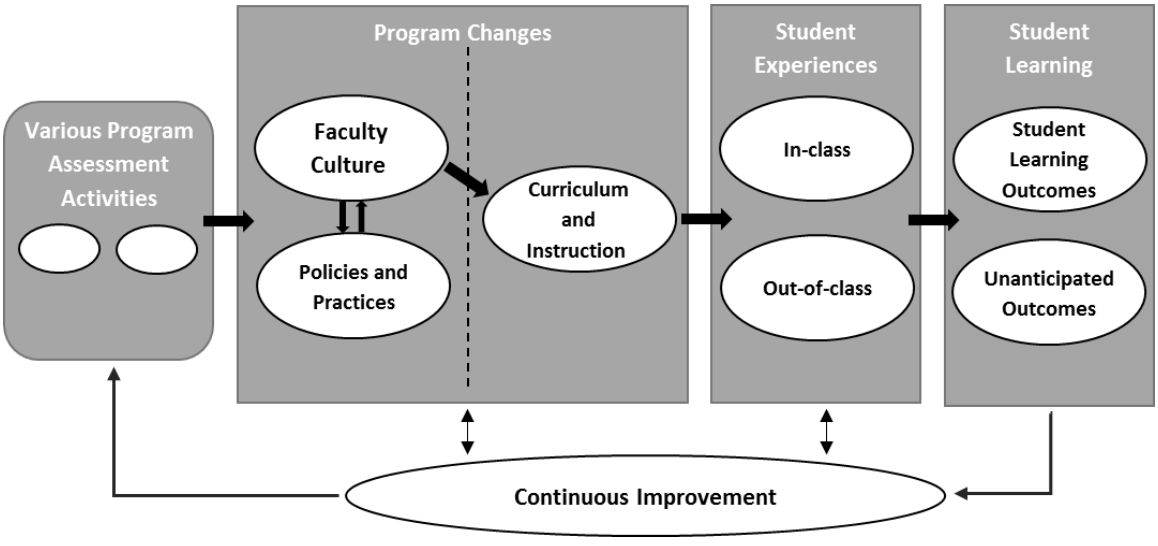

Figure 6.6. Suggested modifications for the conceptual model.

Administrative policies and practices. Under the category of policies and practices, the study showed how assessment can affect the distribution of departmental resources. Program assessment that results in meaningful and useful change requires a great deal of program personnel time. However, as this study and others (e.g., Lattuca et al., 2006; Stitt-Bergh, 2016) have shown, universities have not adjusted their administrative policies and practices to accommodate this, and individual programs lack the authority to change the hiring and rewards system. Many universities have made efforts to support assessment by providing expertise to help guide the process,[28] but departments still struggle with how to allocate faculty time and responsibility to assessment. Further research focusing on how programs or departments are redistributing their resources to better enable program assessment, and the impacts and sustainability of such adjustments, could contribute greatly to our understanding of assessment practice at the program level. While there has been some research into what kinds of resources institutions are providing for assessment (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh et al., 2014, 2014), to my knowledge there has not yet been research into how programs are redistributing their own resources so as to carry out useful program assessment.

Assessment in professionally accredited and nonaccredited programs. Finally, the study furthers the discussion of assessment in programs with professional accreditation versus those without. In a large scale survey, Ewell et al. (2011) found differences in the level of assessment activity between accredited and nonaccredited programs, as well as the way in which programs used assessment information. This case study also found differences between assessment in the BA in AL program and the processes and impacts laid out in the Engineering

[28] Many universities now employ assessment specialists, housed in a university assessment office, center for teaching and learning, or similar office or center. These specialists provide assessment training workshops for faculty and will often offer consultations for departments on program assessment activities.

Change model. A key factor in the different results was the existence of externally determined outcomes for the programs in the Engineering Change study. Programs with professional accreditation are required to meet externally determined outcomes. These outcomes guide their assessment process and to a certain extent their curricular planning. During the assessment process, the outcomes themselves, while open to some level of interpretation, are not subject to change. Rather, faculty and staff are expected to modify the program to meet the outcomes. In a program that does not have professional accreditation requirements, such as the BA in AL program, the program develops its own program goals and learning outcomes. On the one hand this gives the program the freedom to develop goals and outcomes that best suit the students and the flexibility to change as student and program needs change. On the other hand, developing and reaching faculty agreement on program learning outcomes statements can be extremely challenging. In the BA in AL program case study, although outcomes statements were developed when the program was first proposed, years later they still lacked clarity and buy-in from the faculty. The outcomes statements themselves became subject to revision, which created a lengthy and complex assessment process.

More studies on assessment in accredited versus non-accredited programs would be useful in further exploring this issue and other differences in assessment for accredited and nonaccredited programs. Indeed, it could be useful to conduct comparative studies of assessment practice for programs in the same field but with and without professional accreditation. Applied linguistics is a field where these comparisons could be made. As part of a broad, interdisciplinary field, applied linguistics programs can vary in their focal areas and aims. Some programs focus on language teacher education and offer professional teaching accreditation; while others, such

as the BA in AL program, maintain a broad focus and do not offer professional accreditation.[29] Further research, comparing assessment in these different contexts could provide useful information for faculty in applied linguistics involved in program assessment or curriculum development, as well as provide more insight into program assessment in higher education in general.

Limitations

Before concluding, it is important to note the limitations of this study. Every research design has limitations (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and one of the main limitations of this study is that as a single case study it focuses on one program at a certain point in time. In the language of traditional quantitative research design: Its findings are not generalizable to a broader population, nor are they replicable, given that it would be impossible to replicate the exact circumstances of the program and study. However, qualitative case study researchers do not to aim for generalizability or replicability (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Rather, the focus is on deepening our understanding of a phenomenon by investigating the phenomenon in detail, in a real-world context (Yin, 2009). Researchers provide a thick description of the context and phenomenon so that readers can gain an understanding of the complexities of the situation and consider the applicability of the findings to other contexts. In this study, I have made every effort to describe the context and events as fully as possible, and provide clear analysis and discussion of findings so readers can determine for themselves what new knowledge and understandings learned from this study are transferable to their own or broader contexts.

[29] See the Center for Applied Linguistics list of applied linguistic programs for a list of graduate programs in applied linguistics in the US (http://www.cal.org/what-we-do/projects/survey-of-applied-linguistics-programs). The list includes a wide variety of program names and shows them housed in different departments and schools. For example, the University of Alaska Fairbanks has an Applied Linguistics program housed in the Linguistics Department, the University of Delaware has a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program housed in the College of Education, and St. Cloud University has a TESL program housed in the Department of English.

In case study research, it is necessary to delimit the time and scope of the study (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I limited the scope to the BA in AL program, and the data I collected mainly represented the perspectives and experiences of those involved with the BA in AL program. Although there were some interactions with individuals outside the department, for example faculty in the university assessment office and the OVCAA, those individuals were not formally interviewed for this study and their perspectives were not represented. This limited my ability to investigate in depth how decisions regarding the program were being made or how program assessment information was being used at the higher institutional levels. However, this case study is intended to represent program assessment from the perspective of those involved in the program and focus on changes and decisions taking place within the program. I include institutional documents and policies as a means of describing the broader evaluation context of the program, but it was beyond the scope of this study to investigate institutional or college perspectives or their actual uses of assessment.

It is also important to recognize that for practical reasons not every member of the AL Department was interviewed for this study. While I endeavored to include a range of perspectives, including those of BA committee members and nonmembers, faculty, administrators, and GAs, it is possible that some department members' views were not represented. BA student perspectives were not included either. My initial research design included gathering data on BA student perspectives as a means of further triangulating data on student experiences and learning outcomes. However, as it became clear that instructors were not yet able to identify changes to student learning, and the changes to student experiences and curriculum and instruction were still in process and lacked uniformity, I felt that at this point in the assessment process there was little that student perspectives could add to the research. Given

more time and progress on student experiences and learning outcomes, student perspectives would be a valuable addition.

Finally, time limitations affected the data I was able to gather for the study. For practical reasons, it was necessary for me to complete the study before the BA in AL program was able to show changes to student learning. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that assessment does not impact student learning, rather that in this case changes could not yet be identified. Assessment was having positive impacts on student experiences, and given more time there could indeed be impacts on student learning. In designing this study, I chose a case study design with participant observation and prolonged engagement which allowed me to present detailed information on the context and process of assessment as well as the impacts. However, there were limits to the amount of time I could continue such involvement and research. A different kind of study designed to check in on the assessment process periodically over a longer period of time would sacrifice some of the detail, but allow a researcher to follow programs through the assessment processes until they are able to identify changes in student learning.

Conclusion

Despite the considerable amount of assessment activity in higher education institutions, the meaningful use of assessment, especially at the academic program level, remains a challenge. In an effort to better understand how to improve assessment practice, assessment scholars have called for more research into assessment processes and impacts, particularly at the program and disciplinary level. For example, Ewell et al. (2011, p. 21) have called for more case studies on program assessment, noting that there was a real need for more detailed information on how programs undertake assessment and what changes are happening in programs as a result of

assessment. This study helps fulfill that need and provides in-depth information on the assessment processes and impacts for one academic program in higher education.

This case study of assessment practice in a BA in Applied Linguistics program provides valuable information on the context within which programs undertake assessment, what happens as programs go through the assessment process, and what types of changes occur in programs as a result of engaging in assessment. The findings provide insights into how assessment influences faculty culture, administrative policies and practices, curriculum and instruction, and student experiences. The study shows the complexity of the assessment process, and indicates that far from a direct, straightforward inquiry loop, like the one presented in the assessment cycle, programs may need to engage in a number of challenging intermediate steps and detours as they work to use assessment to improve teaching and learning. Finally, this study tests out the applicability of the Engineering Change model to programs without externally determined outcomes, and shows that with some modifications the model is useful as an analytic framework for research methods such as qualitative case studies, and for liberal arts programs like the BA in Applied Linguistics program.

Appendix A: Sample Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol for BA Committee Member / Administrator

Materials: Gift card, informed consent form, audio recorder, computer

Introduction

- Welcome / Thank you
- Discuss informed consent form
- Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to learn more about evaluation and assessment practices in the BA program – specifically how assessment is being implemented and the impact it has on the program.
- Discuss member checking to take place later

Key Questions

1. As far as you are aware, what type of evaluation or assessment activities does the BA program engage in? (If necessary, clarify that this can include activities initiated internally- by people within the program, or externally - by administrators and others outside the program.)

General question for each evaluation activity [X] identified by the participant

2. Tell me about [X].

Probing questions for each evaluation activity identified by the participant:

3. Who has requested the information? (Who receives the information from X?)
4. What is the purpose of X?
5. What type of information is collected?
6. How is the information collected? (What methods are used? When? Who does it?)
7. How has the information been used?
8. What kind of effect has it had on the program? (How has it affected teaching and learning in this program?)
9. How has it affected you? What about other faculty? TA's? Students in the BA program?
10. Can you think of any other ways [doing X] has affected the BA program?

Closing

1. Are there any additional evaluation activities that we haven't talked about yet?
2. Is there anything else you would like to add about the BA program's evaluation activities?
3. Do you have any questions for me?
4. Thank you

Interview Protocol for BA Committee Member / GA

Materials: Gift card, informed consent form, audio recorder, computer

Introduction

- Welcome / Thank you / Gift card
- Discuss confidentiality and informed consent form
- Discuss member checking to take place later

Purpose – The purpose of this interview is to get your perspective on the assessment activities that we've been conducting for the BA program. This includes activities like the outcomes assessment work we did, surveys, the GA workshop we did in December, and any other activities where we've done where we were gathering information about teaching and learning for the purpose of making decisions about or improving the BA program.

Key Questions

A. BA committee meetings

1. First, I'd just like to ask you about the assessment work you've been involved in. If you think back over the months you've been with the BA committee, what assessment work do you remember talking about?
2. Could you talk a little more about [outcomes assessment]?
    a. What do you remember about the process, the different steps?
    b. What do you remember about the results?
    c. Was the [outcomes assessment] process (or the information we learned from the process) useful or helpful to you? In what ways?
3. Did the assessment work we talked about on the BA committee influence how you think about or approach your classes?
    a. Can you think of any specific examples of when it has influenced your planning or teaching for [303]?
4. Did the assessment work we did in the committee influence how you thought about other topics or decisions being made in the BA Committee? I'm thinking of other issues we talked about like the community college, competitive admissions, etc.

B. GA Workshop

In December we had a workshop for AL GAs.

1. What do you recall as far as what we did in the GA workshop?
2. What did you think of it?
3. Has that workshop affected how you approach teaching or planning this semester?
4. Since December, have the topics raised in the outcomes assessment process or the workshop come up at all in discussions you've had with other GAs?
5. Faculty: Have you had a chance to talk with [X] or [Y] about [303]? Has anything related to assessment worked its way into those discussions?
6. We'd like to do another Saturday meeting for AL GAs in the next few weeks. What would you like to see in the upcoming meeting?

Closing

1. Is there anything else you would like to add about the BA program's assessment activities?
2. Is there anything else you would like to talk about? Anything I should have asked?
3. Do you have any questions for me?
4. Thank you.

Focus Group Protocol for non-BA Committee Members / GAs

Materials: Informed consent forms, gift cards, audio recorder, computer

Beginning

- Welcome / Thank you
- Discuss and sign informed consent forms and privacy
- Hand out gift cards
- Introduce format: some background then questions and discussion, member checking

Background:

1. Purpose: Investigate the processes and impacts of program level assessment on an academic program.
2. Why you? You are instructors in the program, and have participated in some of the assessment activities.
3. Why study this? Very little research, even though it's now common practice.
4. What information? Impressions of the workshops you've participated in, how they related to your work as instructors.
5. Feel free to be critical.

Introductions

1. I'd just like to go around and gather information from you about the workshops or meetings you've participated in. If you could just say which workshops or meetings you've been a part of so we know a little bit about each other's experiences.
2. Also, let's really quickly go through what courses you teach or have taught.

December Workshop

1. For those of you who participated in the workshop last semester, what do you recall in terms of what we did or what we talked about? (This isn't a test.)
2. What did you think of the workshop in December? (Was there anything in that meeting that you found particularly useful?)
3. I'm interested in hearing if the workshop may have influenced your teaching last semester.
    a. With regard to your classes, did you apply anything from that workshop/meeting to your teaching last semester?
    b. Over the course of the semester, did anything we talked about in the workshop or meetings come up in your conversations with other instructors? (GAs or faculty)
4. X did you hear about the workshops or meetings from your classmates who attended?
5. Did anyone talk about SLOs or PLOs with your students last semester? If so, what motivated you to do so?

May Workshop

1. What did you think of the May workshop? What was the most useful part of that workshop?
2. Has it changed how you are approaching your classes this summer or in the fall?
3. When you talk with other GAs or faculty members, have any of the topics we talked about in the workshop come up?

4. Does anyone plan on talking about PLOs or SLOs with their students in their classes?
5. Does anyone want to revise the SLOs for their courses?

Suggestions:

1. What type of support or professional development opportunities would you like to see for SLS BA instructors next year?
2. Are there any issues regarding teaching and learning in the BA program that we're not addressing that you would like to see addressed?

Closing?

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?
2. Of all the topics we've talked about today, what is the most important?
3. Thank you.

Interview Protocol for non-BA Committee Faculty Member

Materials: Gift card, informed consent form, audio recorder

Introduction

- Welcome / Thank you / Gift card
- Discuss informed consent form
- Discuss member checking to take place later

Purpose – The purpose of this interview is to get your perspective on the BA program curriculum workshop that we conducted last May.

Key Questions

First, I'd like to get an idea of what you remember because it's been a few months since the workshop.

1. Thinking back to the May workshop, what do you recall in terms of what we did or what we talked about?
2. What did you think of the May workshop? What was the most useful part of that workshop?
3. Did you talk about the workshop further with any faculty or GAs over the summer? If so, what did you talk about
4. Has the workshop changed how you have approached your classes this fall?
    a. If so, what class(es)?
    b. In what ways?
    c. Did you revise the SLOs or any activities in your classes?
5. When you talk with GAs also teaching [303], do you talk about PLOs or SLOs?
6. Do you talk about the PLOs or SLOs with your students in your class?

Suggestions:

1. Do you have any suggestions or ideas regarding the curriculum, assessment, or other professional development activities for instructors and staff in the future?
2. What type of professional development opportunities would you like to see for SLS BA instructors next year?
3. Are there any issues regarding teaching and learning in the BA program that we're not addressing that you would like to see addressed?

Closing

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?
2. Is there anything that I haven't asked about that I should?
3. Thank you.

Appendix B: Code Lists

Note: Code lists are multi-level with child codes indented under parent codes.

Initial Code List

- Program Changes
  - Curriculum and Instruction
    - Subject Matter
    - Instructional Methods
  - Faculty Culture
    - Using information for decision making
    - Faculty involvement
    - Professional Development
  - Policies and Practices
    - Hiring
    - Tenure and Promotion
    - Resource Allocation
- Student Experiences
  - In-class
  - Out-of-class
- Student Learning
  - Student Learning Outcomes
  - Unanticipated Outcomes
- Assessment Activities
  - Course Evaluations
  - Provisional Review
  - Outcomes assessment
  - GA Performance Evaluations
  - College Survey
  - Alumni Survey
  - UFE (Utilization-Focused Evaluation)

Final Code List

- Program Changes
  - Curriculum and Instruction
    - Program structure
      - Outcomes
      - Curriculum map
      - Sequencing
    - Subject Matter and Instructional Methods
      - Course level
      - Section level
    - Advising
  - Faculty Culture
    - Using information for decision making
    - Informs decision making
    - Faculty involvement
    - Professional Development
      - External
      - Internal
        - Curriculum Workshop
    - Communication
    - Bigger Picture
    - Motivation
      - Affirmation of instructor role
      - Confidence
      - Pride
  - Policies and Practices
    - Hiring
    - Tenure and Promotion
    - Resource Allocation
- Student Experiences
  - In-class
    - Clarity and organization
      - Instructions and expectations
      - Syllabus and schedule
    - Linking courses
    - Content and materials
    - Course
      - 302
      - 303
      - 312
      - 313

- 408
- 430
- 485
- 490

- Out-of-class
  - Experiential learning

Student Learning

- Student Learning Outcomes
- Unanticipated Outcomes

Assessment Activities

- Course evaluations
- Provisional review
- Efficiency data
- Outcomes assessment
- GA performance evaluations
- College survey
- Alumni survey
- UFE (Utilization-Focused Evaluation)
- IRO (Institutional Research Office)
- University assessment office
- Individual course review

Context

- BA Program Profile
  - Key Committee Issues
    - CC (Community college)
    - COE (College of Education)
    - Competitive Admissions
    - Graduate placement and recruiting
    - Program resources
    - Practicum
  - Student needs and interests
  - Faculty resource people
  - Instructor Turnover
- Department Profile
- Institution Profile

Lack of impact

Appendix C: Personal Communications Referenced in the Text

Interviews

October 23, 2015 – Interview: Faculty/BA Committee Member

November 13, 2015 – Interview: Faculty/BA Committee Member

March 23, 2016 – Interview: Faculty/BA Committee Member

April 07, 2016 – Interview: Faculty/BA Committee Member

April 20, 2016a – Interview: GA/BA Committee Member

April 20, 2016b – Interview: GA/BA Committee Member

May 25, 2015 – Focus Group Interview: 5 GAs

August 30, 2016 – Interview: Faculty

August 31, 2016 – Interview: GA

November 02, 2016 – Interview: GA/BA Committee Member

Meetings and Workshops

September 25, 2015 – BA Committee Meeting

November 06, 2015 – BA Committee Meeting

December 04, 2015 – BA Committee Meeting

December 05, 2015 – BA Program Workshop

May 18, 2016 – BA Program Workshop

Written Communications and Notes

March 31, 2016 – Email Communication: BA Committee Members

December 15, 2016 – Email Communication: BA Committee Member

January 17, 2017 – Email Communication: BA Committee Member

Appendix D: University Guidelines for the Self-Study for the Established Status Proposal

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF PROVISIONAL PROGRAMS

(1) Is the program organized to meet its objectives?
(Discussion of curriculum, requirements, admissions, advising and counseling, and other aspects of the program, with reference to its objectives.)

(2) Is the Program meeting its learning objectives for students?
(An assessment of the quality of student learning as indicated by systematic analysis of student performance with reference to standard expectations, surveys of student satisfaction with instructional aspects of the program, etc.)

(3) Are program resources adequate?
(Analysis of number and distribution of faculty, faculty areas of expertise, budget and sources of funds, and facilities and equipment.)

(4) Is the program efficient?
(An assessment of productivity and cost/benefit considerations within the overall context of campus and University "mission" and planning priorities. Include quantitative measures comparing, for example, SSH/faculty, average class size, cost per SSH, cost per major with other programs in the college, on the campus and, as appropriate, similar programs on other campuses.)

(5) Evidence of program quality.
(A qualitative assessment of the program in relation to competing demands for resources by new programs and continuing programs. Accreditation or other external evaluation, student performance [e.g., on external exams], satisfaction, placement and employer satisfaction, awards to faculty and students, faculty publication record, evaluation of faculty, etc.)

(6) Are program outcomes compatible with the objectives?
(Analysis of numbers of majors, graduates, SSHs offered, service to non-majors, employment of graduates, etc., in relationship to objectives.)

(7) Are program objectives still appropriate functions of the college and university?
(Relationship to University mission and development plans, evidence of continuing need for the program, projections of employment opportunities for graduates, etc.)

Appendix E: Original and Revised Program Learning Outcomes

Original BA in AL Program Learning Outcomes (2011-2015)

Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will:

1. manifest the skills, understandings, and dispositions necessary to be exceptional language professionals.
2. demonstrate critical thinking and awareness of issues within the context of their professional work and social practice.
3. demonstrate an understanding of the value bases of their professional work.
4. understand and interpret the history of second and foreign language study and its contemporary issues.
5. critically evaluate and make use of research into the learning, use, structure, and pedagogy of second languages.
6. develop and apply sound frameworks in the assessment and evaluation of institutions and agents involved in second language instruction, planning, and policy.
7. show an understanding of local language issues of [the region] in their professional work.
8. be able to prepare minority language students to acquire the academic literacies that would allow them to succeed in educational institutions.
9. improve the quality of teaching and learning second, foreign, and heritage languages, in the state, domestically, and abroad.

Additional program goal: Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will be prepared to apply for admission to graduate programs in second language studies, applied linguistics, or related fields.

Revised BA in AL Program Learning Outcomes (2015-present)

Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will manifest the skills, understandings, and dispositions necessary to be exceptional language professionals. Students will be able to:

1. demonstrate critical thinking and awareness of issues within the context of their professional work and social practice.
2. demonstrate an understanding of the value bases of their professional work.
3. understand and interpret the history of second and foreign language study and its contemporary issues.
4. critically evaluate and make use of research into the learning, use, structure, and/or pedagogy of second languages.
5. develop and apply sound frameworks in the assessment and evaluation of institutions and agents involved in second language instruction, planning, and policy.
6. show an understanding of local language issues of [the region] in their professional work.
7. be able to support language minority students' development of academic and/or professional literacies.

Additional program goals: Upon graduating from the BA in AL, students will be prepared to

- apply for admission to graduate programs in second language studies, applied linguistics, or related fields.
- improve the quality of teaching and learning second, foreign, and heritage languages, in the state, domestically, and abroad

Appendix F: First Assessment Cycle PLOs and Rubric

AL Portfolio Artifact Evaluation Rubric for PLO1 and 3

Program outcomes assessed:
PLO 1. Manifest the skills, understandings, and dispositions necessary to be a language professional
PLO 3. Demonstrate an understanding of the value bases of their professional work.

Evidence: job cover letter and professional philosophy statement

	Below expectations Score = 1	**Meets expectations Score = 2**	**Exceeds expectations Score = 3**
A) Field Specific Understanding & Skills	Shows student's limited and partial knowledge of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, or structures of the field. There is no utilization of relevant sources or major works in the field.	Shows student's knowledge of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the field. Reflects student's knowledge of inquiry, critical analysis and synthesis. Artifacts are somewhat informed by research and best practices in the field.	Shows student's knowledge of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the field. Reflects student's effective application of tools of inquiry, critical analysis, and synthesis. Artifacts are clearly informed by research and best practices in the field.
B) Value Bases & Dispositions	Leaves the reader with a limited understanding of the student's values and beliefs; examples may not be relevant or may not be illustrative.	Shows student's values and beliefs and examples are relevant.	Clearly shows student's values and beliefs and reflect an understanding of self and AL. Connect values and beliefs to AL theory if/where relevant. Examples give the reader a relevant and clear picture of the student displaying these values in context (e.g., teaching situation).
C) Audience, purpose, & personal voice	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, and purpose, for the assigned tasks. No clear sense of the author's voice (i.e., could have been written by anyone)	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned tasks. The author's voice (individual personality) is present.	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose, and a clear focus, that is responsive to the assigned task(s) Meshes the practical and the professional in a voice that is consistent and clearly belongs to the author.
D) Language, Mechanics, & Aesthetics	Numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors; lacks organization and coherence. Casual, conversational language (not appropriate). Aesthetic look (e.g., layout, use of space) is not appropriate for the genre.	Minimal spelling and/or grammatical errors; is organized but needs some improvement. Appropriate language, use of AL terminology. Aesthetic look meets expectations for the genre.	No spelling or grammatical errors; is well-organized; and demonstrates a commitment to quality. Appropriate use of AL terminology, jargon is defined as needed, acronyms spelled out in initial instance. Aesthetic look is pleasing, enhances readability, and is appropriate for the genre.

- Score for PLO1 is based on the holistic evaluation of the artifact.
- Score for PLO3 is based on rubric category B.

Appendix G: Second Assessment Cycle PLOs and Rubric

BA in AL – Rubric for PLOs 1 and 4

PLO 1 - Demonstrate critical thinking and awareness of issues within the context of their professional work and social practice
PLO 4. Critically evaluate and make use of research into the learning, use, structure, and/or pedagogy of second languages

	Below expectations (1pt)	Meets Expectations (2pts)	Exceeds Expectations (3pts)
A) Awareness of issues	Issue is stated with little clarification or description. Significance within AL context is unclear or unexplained.	Issue is stated, described, and clarified adequately so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions. Issue's significance in AL is clear, adequate contextual information is provided.	Issue is stated clearly and described comprehensively for full understanding. Issue's significance in AL is explained and all relevant contextual information (cultural, historical, etc.) is included.
B) Organization	Student lists evidence but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to the focus.	Student organizes evidence coherently, reveals some patterns, differences, or similarities related to the focus	Student organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to the focus.
C) Interpretation and evaluation of evidence	Information is taken from sources without any interpretation / evaluation. Viewpoints are mentioned but not discussed. Student begins to identify some contexts when discussing issue and evidence.	Information is taken from relevant sources with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis. Viewpoints of experts are discussed. Student evaluates the relevance of contexts (cultural, historical, etc.) when discussing issue and evidence.	Information is taken from relevant sources with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a thorough analysis Viewpoints of experts are questioned and discussed thoroughly. Student thoroughly evaluates the relevance of contexts (cultural, historical, etc.) when discussing issue and evidence.
D) Conclusions	Conclusions are inconsistently tied to the information discussed; may be illogical, oversimplified, or too general.	Conclusions are logical and reflect student's ability to place evidence in context.	Conclusions are logical and reflect students' informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives in context.
E) Application	Theories and findings are applied inappropriately to teaching, language policies and practices, further research, etc. Or, student fails to draw any connection.	Student applies research theories and findings appropriately to teaching, language policies and practices, further research, etc.	Student insightfully applies research theories and findings to teaching, language policies and practices, further research, etc. Implications and limitations are discussed thoroughly.
F) Access and use of information	Student frequently errs in the following: • use of citations and references (APA style) • paraphrasing, summarizing or quoting • using information in ways that reflect its original context • distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution	Student does the following appropriately, but with some minor errors: • use of citations and references (APA style) • paraphrasing, summarizing or quoting • using information in ways that reflects its original context • distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution	Student does the following appropriately: • use of citations and references (APA style) • paraphrasing, summarizing or quoting • using information in ways that reflects its original context • distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution

SLO 1

SLO 4

Apply criteria A-D to PLO 1. Apply criteria A-F to PLO 4.

Appendix H: BA in AL Curriculum Maps

Original BA in AL Curriculum Map (2011-2015)

KEY: I = Introduced; R = Reinforced, practiced; M = Mastered; A = Assessed*

Course	Introductory / Required / Elective									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AL 302	Required	I	I	I	I	I	I			
AL 303	Required	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
AL 312	Elective	R	R	R	R	R		I	R	
AL 313	Elective	R	R	R	R	R		I	R	
AL 380	Required	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	I
AL 418	Elective	R	R			R	R			R
AL 430	Required	R	R	R		R	R	R		
AL 441	Required	R					R		R	
AL 460	Elective	R		R		R				
AL 480-alpha (varies)	Required	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
AL 490	Required	R	R	R	R	R	R			R
AL 480-P (capstone)	Required	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA

Revised BA in AL Curriculum Map (2015-present)

KEY: I = Introduced; R = Reinforced, practiced; M = Mastered; A = Assessed*

Course	Introductory / Required / Elective	Student Learning Outcome						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AL 150	Introductory elective	I	I	I			I	
AL 280	Introductory elective	I		I	I		I	I
AL 302	Required	I	I	I	I	I		
AL 303	Required	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
AL 312	Elective	R	R	R	R	R	I	R
AL 313	Elective	R	R	R	R	R	I	R
AL 408	Required	R	R	R	R	R	RMA	R
AL 418	Elective	R			R	R		
AL 430	Required	R	R		R	R	RMA	
AL 441	Required					R		R
AL 460	Elective		R		R			
AL 480-alpha (varies)	Required	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
AL 490	Required	R	R	R	R	MA		
AL 485 (capstone)	Required	MA	MA	MA	MA			MA

Appendix I: Handout and Reflection Activity from Curriculum Workshop

Action Verb List

Word Power

Concrete verbs such as "define," "argue," or "create" are more helpful for assessment than vague verbs such as "know," "understand," or passive verbs such as "be exposed to." Some examples of action words frequently used in [outcomes] are included in the table below.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
define	classify	apply	analyze	arrange	appraise
identify	describe	compute	appraise	assemble	assess
indicate	discuss	construct	calculate	collect	choose
know	explain	demonstrate	categorize	compose	compare
label	express	dramatize	compare	construct	contrast
list	identify	employ	contrast	create	decide
memorize	locate	give examples	criticize	design	estimate
name	paraphrase	illustrate	debate	formulate	evaluate
recall	recognize	interpret	determine	manage	grade
record	report	investigate	diagram	organize	judge
relate	restate	operate	differentiate	perform	measure
repeat	review	organize	distinguish	plan	rate
select	suggest	practice	examine	prepare	revise
underline	summarize	predict	experiment	produce	score
	tell	schedule	inspect	propose	select
	translate	shop	inventory	set-up	value
		sketch	question		
		translate	relate		
		use	solve		

Source*: Course based review and assessment: Methods for understanding student learning*. (2001). Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, page 13.

Reflection Activity

Look at the syllabus and reflect on the SLOs and assessment activities for your course.

1. What assessment activities provide evidence of the SLO?
2. Critique the SLOs

   (e.g. Is the SLO realistic? Does the SLO use action verbs to describe observable actions?)
3. Critique the assessment activities

   (e.g., Is it a good match? Is there adequate preparation? Are the guidelines clear so that students can meet expectations?)

Appendix J: Rubrics for AL 485 Professional Philosophy Statements

2013 Rubric

	Unacceptable (revise and resubmit)	Meets minimum expectations	Exceeds minimum expectations	Add'l points
Name and title	Missing name (.doc or.pdf)	Includes name	Includes a relevant title	0
Length	< 500 words	Minimum of 500 words	NA	0
Number of aspects of philosophy discussed	1 or fewer	2	NA	--
Organization	Organizational pattern not evident, not followed, or confusing to the reader.	Follows a planned organizational pattern that is clear to the reader.	Organizational pattern results in smooth flow, ease of reading. Points developed logically (according to org. pattern used)	/2
Content & use of examples	Drifts off subject, or never addresses values and beliefs. No examples, or examples that don't match the aspect of philosophy.	Remains relevant to the individual's values and beliefs. The reader can clearly identify what these values and beliefs are. Examples apply to aspects of philosophy	Discussion of values and beliefs reflects deep understanding of self and AL. Connects values and beliefs to AL theory if/where relevant. Examples give the reader a relevant and clear picture of the author doing these things in a teaching situation.	/3
Appropriate language	Casual, conversational (not professional)	Professional language, use of AL terminology	Professional, use of AL terminology, jargon is defined as needed, acronyms spelled out in initial instance	/2
Personal voice	No clear sense of the author's voice (i.e., could have been written by anyone)	The flow and voice clearly belong to the author.	Meshes the practical and the professional in a voice that is consistent and clearly belongs to the author.	/2
Proofreading, grammar	No points deducted. If obvious errors exist, instructors will recommend proofreading before making portfolio available to potential employers			0
Points earned	**N/A**	**22**		**/8**

Total points = _____ of 30

2016 Rubric

	Unacceptable (revise and resubmit)	Meets minimum expectations	Exceeds minimum expectations	Add'l points
Name and title	Missing student's name in file name, missing name in document	Includes student's name in both file name and on document	Includes a relevant title	0
Length	< 500 words	500-1000+ words	NA	0
Organization	Organizational pattern not evident, not followed, or confusing to the reader	Follows a planned organizational pattern that is clear to the reader. Includes an introduction, body and conclusion	Organizational pattern results in smooth flow, ease of reading. Points developed logically (according to org. pattern used), smooth fluency and clear voice	/1
What: *Content & details: Expresses Values & Beliefs*	Leaves the reader with a limited understanding of the author's values and beliefs	Relevant to the author's values and beliefs. The reader can identify what these values and beliefs are	Discussion of values and beliefs reflects deep understanding of self and AL and/or other relevant fields	/3
What supports your ideas: *Knowledge of AL supports values & beliefs*	Shows limited or no knowledge of AL theories or concepts	Evidence of knowledge of AL concepts used in support of stated values & beliefs	Philosophy is clearly informed and supported by research and best [effective] practices in AL or another relevant field	/2
How: *Use of examples of putting beliefs into practice*	No examples, or examples that don't match the aspect of philosophy	Examples are relevant and apply to aspects of philosophy	Examples give the reader a relevant and clear picture of the author doing these things in a teaching (or other professional) situation	/2
Appropriate language, grammar, proofreading	Casual, conversational (not professional), errors deter from understanding or show obvious neglect	Professional language, use of AL terminology when appropriate, jargon is defined as needed, acronyms spelled out in initial instance, minimal errors that don't deter from meaning. Carefully proofread. Uses APA citations	NA	0
Points earned	**N/A**	**22/30= 73%= C**		**/8**

Total points = _____ of 30

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